



CHRISTIANITY NOT MYSTERIOUS: OR, A TREATISE
SHEWING, THAT THERE IS NOTHING IN THE
GOSPEL CONTRARY TO REASON, NOR ABOVE IT. TO
WHICH IS ADDED, AN APOLOGY FOR MR. TOLAND

JOHN TOLAND



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Christianity Not Mysterious: Or,
a Treatise Shewing, That There
Is Nothing in the Gospel
Contrary to Reason, Nor Above
It. to Which Is Added, an
Apology for Mr. Toland

John Toland

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TREATISE

ON THE
NATURE AND
PROPERTIES OF
THE HUMAN MIND

BY
JOHN LOCKE

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE FIRST

OF THE HUMAN MIND

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE SECOND

OF THE HUMAN MIND



Christianity not Mystorious:

O R, A

TREATISE

Shewing,

That there is nothing in the
GOSPEL Contrary to

R E A S O N,

Nor Above it:

And that no Christian Doctrine
can be properly call'd

A M Y S T E R Y.

By JOHN TOLAND.

To which is Added,

An Apology for Mr. Toland, in relation to the Parliament of Ireland's ordering this Book to be burnt.

We need not desire a better Evidence that any Man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare against Reason, and thereby to acknowledg that Reason is against him.
Arch-bishop Tillotson.

London, Printed in the Year 1702.



THEATRE

Theatre is a form of art that is performed in front of an audience. It can be a play, a musical, or a puppet show. Theatres are places where people go to watch these performances.

There are many different types of theatres. Some are very large and have many seats. Others are very small and only have a few seats. Some theatres are outdoors and some are indoors.

Theatre is a very important part of our culture. It helps us to learn about different people and places. It also helps us to have fun and to relax.

There are many famous theatres in the world. Some of them are very old and some are very new. They all have their own special style and way of performing.

One of the most famous theatres in the world is the Royal Opera House in London. It has been around for over 300 years and is still one of the best theatres in the world.

Another famous theatre is the New York City Opera. It has been around for over 50 years and is also one of the best theatres in the world.

There are many other famous theatres in the world, but these are just a few of the most famous ones. Each theatre has its own special story and history.

One of the most interesting things about theatre is that it is always changing. New plays and musicals are being written all the time, and old ones are being rediscovered.

Another interesting thing about theatre is that it is a very collaborative art form. It takes many different people working together to create a great performance.

One of the most important things about theatre is that it is a very powerful tool for communication. It can help us to understand each other better and to learn about the world around us.

There are many different ways to experience theatre. You can go to a live performance, watch a recording, or even participate in a workshop.

One of the best ways to experience theatre is to go to a live performance. This allows you to see all the details of the production and to hear the actors' voices.

Another great way to experience theatre is to watch a recording. This allows you to see the performance over and over again and to pause it when you need to.

Participating in a workshop is also a great way to experience theatre. This allows you to learn about the different aspects of theatre and to practice your own skills.

There are many different ways to experience theatre, and each one has its own special benefits. No matter how you choose to experience it, theatre is a very important and powerful art form.

So, if you are looking for a new way to spend your free time, why not try theatre? It is a fun, exciting, and educational experience that is sure to leave a lasting impression on you.

THE PREFACE.

I Believe all Men will readily allow, that none should speak with more Freedom and Assurance than he that defends or illustrates the Truth. But if we credit the History of former Time, or duly consider what passes in the present, we shall find none more backward to speak their Minds in publick than such as have Right on their side. Witness the Goodness of their Cause and Design should fortify and, we would think, against all the Attacks of their Enemies. None were wanting for frequent Examples of Persons in whom such a virtuous Conscience fasten'd the

The Preface.

most disgraceful and violent things for love of the Truth. — Yet if we make a just Computation, and take in the Primitive Martyrs with the Prophets and Apostles themselves, the profess'd Defenders of Truth, only for Truth's sake, will be found to be a small handful with respect to the numerous Partizans of Error.

And such is the deplorable Condition of our Age, that a Man dares not openly and directly own what he thinks of Divine Matters, tho it be never so true and beneficial, if it but very slightly differs from what is received by any Party, or that is establish'd by Law; but he is either forced to keep perpetual Silence, or to propose his Sentiments to the World, by way of Paradox, under a borrow'd or fictitious Name. To mention the least part of the Inconveniences they expose themselves to, who
have

The Preface.

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have the *Courage* to act more above-board, is too melancholy a Theme, and visible enough to be lamented by all that are truly generous and vertuous.

The *Pravity* of most Mens Dispositions, and the *Ambition* of particular Persons makes this Matter seem less strange in Politick and Secular Affairs; and yet a Man may not only make new Discoveries and Improvements in Law or Physick, and in the other Arts and Sciences impunibly, but also for so doing be deservedly encourag'd and rewarded. But wonderful! That the sacred Name of Religion which sounds nothing but Sanctity, Peace, and Integrity, should be so universally abus'd to patronize Ambition, Impiety, and Contention! And that what is our highest Interest perfectly to understand, should (for Reasons afterwards to be laid open) both be maintain'd

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tain'd to be obscure; and very industriously made so! Nay, it is come to this, that Truth meets no where with stronger Opposition, than from many of those that raise the loudest Cry about it, and would be taken for no less than the only Dispensers of the Favours and Oracles of Heaven. If any has the Firmness to touch the minutest thing that brings them Gain or Credit; he's presently pursu'd with the Hue and Cry of Heresy: And, if he values their Censures, compell'd to make honourable Amends; or if he proves contumacious, he falls a Sacrifice, at least in his Reputation, to their implacable Hatred:

Nor is he like, we may be sure, to receive fairer Quarter from the declar'd Antagonists of Religion, whose Principles, as they trample upon all Equity and Truth, so they oblige 'em to hate and molest the strenuous Assertors

tors of these and all other *Vertues*. But of such depressing Considerations enough ! Notwithstanding which, I have ventur'd to publish this Discourse, designing thereby to rectify, as much as I'm able, the narrow bigotted Tenets of the One, and the most impious Maxims of the Other.

No Atheist or Infidel of any kind can justly be angry with me for measuring Swords with them, and attacking them only with the Weapons they prescribe me. The true Christian can no more be offended, when he finds me imploy Reason, not to enervate or perplex, but to confirm and elucidate Revelation ; unless he is apprehensive I should render it too clear to my self, or too familiar to others, which are Absurdities no Body will own. I hope to make it appear, that the Use of Reason is not so dangerous in Religion as it is commonly

represented, and that too by such as mightily extol it, when it seems to favour 'em, yet vouchsafe it not a hearing when it makes against them, but oppose its own Authority to it self. These are high Privileges indeed, and the surest Means of having always the better of the Dispute that could possibly be devis'd.

That the mistaken Unbeliever may not say I serve a Hypothesis in the Defence of my Faith, like some who first imagine or receive an Opinion, and then study Proofs to establish it, I solemnly declare the thing is much otherwise; and that I hold nothing as an Article of my Religion, but what the highest Evidence forc'd me to embrace. For being educated, from my Cradle, in the grossest Superstition and Idolatry, God was pleas'd to make my own Reason, and such as made use of theirs, the happy Instruments
of

of my Conversion. Thus I have been very early accustom'd to Examination and Enquiry, and taught not to captivate my Understanding, no more than my Senses to any Man or Society whatsoever. Now the best Method, I think, of communicating to others the Truth, is that by which a Man has learnt it himself.

That the well-meaning Christian may not suspect, as it falls out very ordinarily, that I aim at more than I declare, and cunningly disguise some bad Principles under the fair Pretence of defending the true Religion; I assure him that I write with all the Sincerity and Simplicity imaginable, being as thoroughly convinc'd of what I maintain, as I can be of any thing. If any good Man should after this Protestation persist to think hard of me, it must needs proceed from violent Prepossessions: for
very

The Preface.

very few can be found that are not deeply engag'd in some of one sort or another, for which a due Allowance must be made. How fond are we all apt to be of what we learn'd in our Youth, as the Sight or Remembrance of the Places where we past that agreeable Time, does strangely affect us! A Mother is more charm'd with the lisp'ing half-form'd Words of her prattling Infant, than with the best Language, and most solid Discourses. That any Upstart, but of Yesterday, should pretend to overthrow what cost the Antients so much Time and Breath to establish, and themselves so great Pains and Charges to learn, is of hard Digestion to some. And when others are but pray'd to explain their Terms, which commonly signify nothing, or what they must be asham'd to own that would never be thought in an Error, they are uneasy, as an extravagant Mer-

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Merchant to examine his Accompts; and 'tis well if they can restrain their Passions. Not only a few Men, but oftentimes whole Societies, whilst they consider Things but very superficially, set such a Value upon certain Sounds, as if they were the real Essence of all Religion. To question or reject any of these, tho never so false and inconvenient, is dangerous Heterodoxy: And yet, as I hinted now, they either signify nothing, or have been invented by some leading Men to make plain things obscure, and not seldom to cover their own Ignorance. What is unpardonable, the holy Scripture is put to the Torture to countenance this Scholastick Jargon, and all the metaphysical Chimeras of its Authors. But the weakness of the greatest part of these Prejudices is so notorious, that to mention them is sufficient Confutation: Nor shall

The Preface.

I be otherwise mov'd with any thing of this Nature, than a prudent Man would be at the Declamations of such as have recourse to Railing when Reason fails them.

As for those Gentlemen who suggest that the Credulity of Popery has frighted me to an unwarrantable Distance from it ; I have nothing to say for their Satisfaction, but that I don't envy them the cheap and commodious Mean they boast of, while I think Truth and Error to be the two Extreame. Religion is not to be modell'd according to our Fancies, nor to be judg'd of as it relates to our private Designs ; else there would be full as many Creeds as Persons : But how little soever our Notions agree, and let our worldly Conveniences be what they will, Religion is always the same, like God its Author, with whom there is no
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Variableness, nor Shadow of changing.

If any should ask me whether I have so good an Opinion of my own Abilities, as to imagine that I can prove a rational Account may be given of all those jarring Doctrines, ambiguous Terms, and puzzling Distinctions which have for so many Centuries sufficiently exercis'd the Learn'd of all sorts: I answer, that I don't pretend (as the Title-Page can testify) that we are able to explain the Terms or Doctrines of this or that Age, Council, or Nation, (most of which are impervious Mysteries with a witness) but the Terms and Doctrines of the Gospel. They are not the Articles of the East or West, Orthodox or Arian, Protestant or Papist, consider'd as such, that I trouble myself about, but those of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. And in managing

cerning the following Performance, I don't expect any Deference should be paid me by the World, that spares no body; much less am I desirous of Abettors out of Singularity: but rather if the Reasons I offer be not cogent, I shall take in good part a modest and pertinent Anumadversion. And if I am not so happy in rendring things perspicuous to others, as they seem to my self, yet I have fairly aim'd at it, and spoke what I think to be Truth without Fear or Favour; wherefore my good Intentions will need no other Apology.

Some Passages in the first Section or preliminary Dissertations of Reason, which, in the former Edition, I suspected would prove a little obscure to ordinary Readers, are now rendr'd more familiar: And tho I then declar'd that the understanding of those Passages of no Consequence to any
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that would reason fairly, being only inserted to prevent the foreseen Wranglings of certain Men, who study rather to protract and perplex than to terminate a Controversy; yet I could not but readily comply at this time with the Desires of those, who wish'd 'em more clearly express'd, tho it should cost me a few Words more, whereof I shall always be as sparing as I can. I have likewise every where else endeavour'd to speak very intelligibly, and am not without hope that my Assertions do carry their own Light along with them. I have in many Places made explanatory Repetitions of difficult Words, by synonymous Terms of a more general and known Use. This Labour, I grant, is of no Benefit to Philosophers, but it is of considerable Advantage to the Vulgar, which I'm far from neglecting, like those who in every Preface

tell us they neither court nor care for them. I wonder how any can speak at this rate, especially of those whose very Business it is to serve the Vulgar, and spare them the Labour of long and painful Study, which their ordinary Occupations will not allow them. Lay-men pay for the Books and Maintenance of Church-men for this very end: but I'm afraid some of the latter will no more believe this, than that Magistrates too are made for the People.

Nor can any from this Office of the Clergy infer, that the Vulgar are implicitly to receive their Arbitrary Dictates, no more than I am to make over my Reason to him I employ to read, transcribe, or collect for me. The Learn'd will not, contrary to the Experience of their own Taste, take the Brewer's or the Baker's Word for the Goodness of Bread or Drink, tho
ignorant

ignorant of their Craft. And why may not the Vulgar, likewise be Judges of the true Sense of Things, tho they understand nothing of the Tongues from whence they are translated for their Use? Truth is always and every where the same; and an unintelligible or absurd Proposition is to be never the more respected for being antient or strange, for being originally written in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew. Besides, a Divinity only intelligible to such as live by it, is, in humane Language, a Trade; and I see not how they can be angry at the Name, that are so passionately in love with the Thing. But of this in due place.

The Poor, who are not suppos'd to understand Philosophical Systems, soon apprehended the Difference between the plain convincing Instructions of Christ, and the intricate ineffectual Declamations of the Scribes. For

the Jewish Rabbies, divided at that time into Stoick, Platonick, and Pythagorean Sects, &c. did by a mad Liberty of Allegory, accommodate the Scriptures to the wild Speculations of their several Masters. They made the People, who comprehended nothing of their Cabalistical Observations, believe 'em to be all profound Mysteries; and so taught 'em Subjection to Heathenish Rites, whilst they set the Law of God at nought by their Traditions. No wonder then if the disinterested common sort, and the more ingenuous among the Rulers, did reject these nonsensical Superstitions, tho' impudently father'd upon Moses, for a Religion suited to the Capacities of all, delineated, and foretold by their own Prophets.

I wish no Application of this could be made, in the following Discourse, to the Case of any Christians; much less

less to the purer and better sort. Whoever considers with what Eagerness and Rigour some Men press Obedience to their own Constitutions and Discipline, (conniving in the mean while at all Nonconformity to the Divine Law) how strictly they enjoin the Observation of unreasonable, unscriptural Ceremonies, and the Belief of those unfathomable Explanations of what they stiffly hold themselves to be incomprehensible; I say, who considers all this, is vehemently tempted to suspect they drive a more selfish Design than that of instructing the ignorant, or converting the Sinner. That any should be hated, despis'd, and molested; nay, sometimes be charitably burn'd and damn'd, for rejecting those Fooleries superadded, and in many Cases substituted to the most blessed, pure, and practicable Religion that Men could wish or
2 3 enjoy,

enjoy, is Matter of Astonishment and Grief to such as prefer the Precepts of God to the Inventions of Men, the plain Paths of Reason to the insuperable Labyrinths of the Fathers, and true Christian Liberty to Diabolical and Antichristian Tyranny.

But the common Method of teaching and supporting this Mystery of Iniquity is still more intolerable. How many voluminous Systems, infinitely more difficult than the Scripture, must be read with great Attention by him that would be Master of the present Theology? What a prodigious Number of barbarous Words, (mysterious no doubt) what tedious and immethodical Directions, what ridiculous and discrepant Interpretations must you patiently learn and observe, before you can begin to understand a Professor of that Faculty? The last and easiest part of your Labour will be, to find

find his Sentiments in the Bible, tho the holy Penmen never thought of them, and you never read that sacred Book since you were a School-Boy. But a Distrust of your own Reason, a blind Veneration for those that liv'd before you, and a firm Resolution of adhering to all the Expositions of your Party, will do any thing. Believe only, as a sure Foundation for all your Allegories, that the Words of Scripture, tho never so equivocal and ambiguous without the Context, may signify every where whatever they can signify : And, if this be not enough, believe that every Truth is a true Sense of every Passage of Scripture ; that is, that any thing may be made of every thing : And you'll not only find all the New Testament in the Old, and all the Old in the New ; but, I promise you, there's no Explication, tho never so violent,

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Christian Religion was not form'd after such a manner, but was divinely revealed from Heaven. These three Subjects I handle in as many Books; whereof, as I said before, the following Discourse is the first.

Before I finish, I must take notice of those Gentlemen who love to call Names in Religion: for what are all Party-Distinctions, but, according to them, so many sorts of Hereticks, or Schismaticks, or worse? But I assure them, that I am neither of Paul, nor of Cephas, nor of Apollos, but of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, who is the Author and Finisher of my Faith. I have as much Right to have others call'd after my Name, as they to give me a Denomination, and that is no Right at all. I say not this to prevent being invidiously represented, according to a very common Artifice, under the No-
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tion of any Sect in the World that is justly or unjustly hated by others. This would be a poor Consideration indeed ! but it is my settl'd Judgment, that the thing is unlawful in it self to a good Christian. Leaving others nevertheless their Liberty in this Point, it must, at least, be granted inconvenient : for if you go under the Name of a Lutheran, for instance, tho you agree with those of your Communion but in the main Articles, yet their Adversaries will not fail, upon occasion, to charge you with those other Matters wherein you dissent. And should you then declare your Judgment, the rest of the Lutherans will not only be much offended, but be apt also to call your Sincerity in question about every thing besides ; which is the known Temper of most Sects. The only religious Title therefore that I shall ever own, for my part, is that ..

that most glorious one of being a Christian.

A Word or two more I must add in answer to the Malice or Mistake of some, who will needs have it that I'm a declar'd Enemy to all Churchmen, and consequently (say they) to all Religion, because I make 'em the sole Contrivers of those inconceivable or mysterious Doctrines, which I also maintain are as advantageous to themselves, as they are prejudicial to the Laity. Indeed there are those, who, easily overlooking all Contempt of the true Religion, are very ready to treat 'em as pernicious Hereticks, or unsufferable Atheists, that shew the least Dislike of what are acknowledg'd Additions to Christianity, whatever Convenience or Necessity may be pretended for their Establishment. If any such understand by Religion the mysterious Part of it, then truly it
will

will be no hard matter to prove me as little favourable to this Religion, as I'm far from making any Apologies for my self to the Professors of it.

As for charging Church-men with being the Authors and Introducers of the Christian Mysteries, they must be my Enemies for telling the Truth, who are displeas'd at it : for there is no matter of Fact more evident from every Page both of the Civil, and Ecclesiastick Histories. Nor had the Laity ever any hand in that Business, otherwise than as confirming by Legal Sanctions what they were first perswaded to by the preaching of their Priests ; as they do now sometimes, at their Sollicitation, imprison excommunicated, and prosecute erroneous Persons, after the Excommunication is first pronounc'd, and the Heresy decreed or declar'd by the Clergy. Now as all Church-men are not

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in their Opinions for these Practices, so I see no better Reason they have to be angry with any Body for writing against them that are, than a good Prince can pretend for punishing the Historian of a Tyrant's Vices, only because the Tyrant had been likewise a Prince.

To all corrupt Clergy-men therefore, who make a meer Trade of Religion, and build an unjust Authority upon the abus'd Consciences of the Laity, I'm a profest Adversary; as I hope every good and wise Man already is, or will be. But as I shall always remain a hearty Friend to pure and genuine Religion, so I shall preserve the highest Veneration for the sincere Teachers thereof, than whom there is not a more useful Order of Men, and without whom there could not be any happy Society or well constituted Government in this World, to speak
nothing

nothing of their Relation to the World to come, nor of the double Esteem which they deserve for keeping Proof against the general Infection of their Profession. But I have no Apprehensions from the sincere; and if the designing Party discover their Concern by their Displeasure, it may well serve for a Mark to distinguish them, but will not be thought an Injury by me.

ERRATA.

P. Ag. 20. l. antepen. f. any read an. P. 122. l. 9. r. last Chapter. P. 136. l. ult. f. park. P. 166. l. 22. r. Degrees.

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CHRISTIANITY *not*
Mysterious, &c.

The State of the Question.

N^o 1. **T**HERE is nothing that Men make a greater Noise about, in our Time especially, than what they generally profess least of all to understand. It may be easily concluded, I mean *the Mysteries of the Christian Religion*. The *Divines*, whose peculiar Province it is to explain them to others, almost unanimously own their Ignorance concerning them. They gravely tell us, *we must adore what we cannot comprehend*: And yet some of 'em press their dubious Comments upon the rest of Mankind with more Assurance and Heat, than could be tolerably justifi'd, tho' we should grant them to be absolutely infallible.

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The worst on't is, they are not all of a Mind. If you be *Orthodox* to those, you are a *Heretick* to these. He that sides with a Party is adjudg'd to Hell by the Rest; and if he declares for none, he receives no milder Sentence from all.

2. Some of 'em say the *Mysteries of the Gospel* are to be understood only in the Sense of the *Antient Fathers*. But that is so multifarious, and inconsistent with it self, as to make it impossible for any Body to believe so many Contradictions at once. They themselves did caution their Readers from leaning upon their Authority, without the Evidence of *Reason*: And thought as little of becoming a Rule of Faith to their Posterity, as we do to ours. Moreover, as all the *Fathers* were not Authors, so we cannot properly be said to have their genuine Sense. The Works of those that have written are wonderfully corrupted and adulterated, or not entirely extant: And if they were, their Meaning is much more obscure, and subject to Controversy, than that of the *Scripture*.

3. Others

3. Others tell us we must be of the Mind of some *particular Doctors*, pronounc'd Orthodox by the Authority of the *Church*. But as we are not a whit satisfy'd with any Authority of that Nature, so we see these same *particular Doctors* could no more agree than the whole Herd of the *Fathers*; but tragically declaim'd against one another's Practices and Errors: That they were as injudicious, violent, and factious as other Men: That they were for the greatest part very credulous and superstitious in Religion, as well as pitifully ignorant and superficial in the minutest Punctilios of Literature. In a word, that they were of the same Nature and Make with our selves; and that we know of no Privilege above us bestow'd upon them by Heaven, except Priority of Birth, if that be one, as it's likely few will allow.

4. Some give a decisive Voice in the Unravelling of *Mysteries*, and the Interpretation of *Scripture*, to a *General Council*; and others to *one Man* whom they hold to be the Head of the *Church* Universal upon Earth, and the infallible Judg of all Controversies. But we

do not think such *Councils* possible, nor (if they were) to be of more Weight than the *Fathers*; for they consist of such, and others as obnoxious altogether to Mistakes and Passions: And besides, we cannot have Recourse, as to a standing Rule, for the Solution of our Difficulties, to a wonder by God's Mercy now more rarely seen than the secular Games of old. As for the *one Judge of all Controversies*, we suppose none but such as are strongly prepossess'd by Interest or Education can in good earnest digest those chimerical supreme Headships, and Monsters of Infallibility. We read no where in the *Bible* of such delegate Judges appointed by *Christ* to supply his Office: And *Reason* manifestly proclaims them frontless Usurpers. Nor is their Power finally distinguish'd from that of *Councils* to this Hour, by the miserable Admirers of both.

5. They come nearest the thing who affirm, that we are to keep to what the *Scriptures* determine about these Matters: and there is nothing more true, if rightly understood. But ordinarily 'tis an equivocal Way of speak-

speaking, and nothing less than the proper Meaning of it is intended by many of those that use it: For they make the *Scriptures* speak either according to some spurious *Philosophy*, or they conform them right or wrong to the bulky Systems and Formularies of their several Communion.

6. Some will have us always believe *what the literal Sense imports*, with little or no Consideration for *Reason*, which they reject as not fit to be employ'd about the reveal'd Part of Religion. Others assert, that we may use *Reason* as the Instrument, but not the Rule of our Belief. The first contend, some *Mysteries* may be, or at least seem to be *contrary to Reason*, and yet be receiv'd by Faith. The second, that no *Mystery* is contrary to *Reason*, but that all are *above* it. Both of 'em from different Principles agree, that several Doctrines of the *New Testament* belong no farther to the Enquiries of *Reason* than to prove 'em divinely reveal'd, and that they are properly *Mysteries* still.

7. On the contrary, we hold that *Reason* is the only Foundation of all Certitude; and that nothing reveal'd, whether as to its *Manner* or *Existence*, is more exempted from its Disquisitions, than the ordinary Phenomena of Nature. Wherefore, we likewise maintain, according to the Title of this Discourse, that *there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, nor above it; and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a Mystery.*

SECTION I.

Of R E A S O N.

I. **T**HE State of the Question being thus fairly laid, our next business is to proceed to the Proof thereof. But as the distinct and brief Explanation of the Terms is of indispensable use in discussing all Controversies; so an easy and natural Method is not less pleasing than profitable. It happily falls out that the Terms of the present Question are dispos'd according to the Order I design to observe; which is, First, to shew what is meant by *Reason*, and its Property's: Then to prove there's no Doctrine of the Gospel contrary to *Reason*: After that, to evince that neither is there any of them above *Reason*; and by consequence, that none is a *Mystery*.

C H A P. I.

What *REASON* is not.

2. **T**O begin with the first, *viz.* *Reason.* It appears to me very odd, that Men should need Definitions and Explanations of that whereby they define and explain all other things: Or that they cannot agree about what they all pretend, in some measure at least, to possess; and is the only Privilege they claim over Brutes and Inanimates. But we find by Experience, that the word *Reason* is become as equivocal and ambiguous as any other; though all that are not tickl'd with the Vanity of Singularity, or Itch of Dispute, are at bottom agreed about the Thing. I'll handle it here with what Brevity I can.

3. They are mistaken who take the *Soul, abstractedly consider'd, for Reason*: For as the general Idea of Gold is not a Guinea, but a piece determin'd to a particular Stamp and Value; so not the Soul it self, but the Soul acting in a certain

certain and peculiar Manner, is *Reason*. Ch. 1.
 They err likewise, who affirm *Reason* to be *that Order, Report, or Relation which is naturally between all things*: For not this, but the Thoughts which the Soul forms of things according to it, may properly claim that Title. They speak no better who call *their own Inclinations*, or the *Authority of others*, by that Name. But it will better appear what it is from the following Considerations.

4. Every one experiences in himself a Power or Faculty of forming various Ideas or Perceptions of Things: Of affirming or denying, according as he sees them to agree or disagree: And so of loving and desiring what seems good unto him; and of hating and avoiding what he thinks evil. The right Use of all these Faculties is what we call Common Sense, or *Reason* in general. But the bare Act of receiving Ideas into the Mind, whether *by the Intromission of the Senses*, as Colours, Figures, Sounds, Smells, &c. or whether those Ideas be *the simple Operations of the Soul* about what it thus gets from without, as meer *Consciousness*
 for

Sect. I. for Example, *Knowing*, *Affirming*, or *Denying*, without any farther Considerations: This bare Act, I say, of receiving such Ideas into the Mind, is not strictly *Reason*, because the Soul herein is purely passive. When a proper Object is conveniently presented to the Eye, Ear, or any other Sense rightly dispos'd, it necessarily makes those Impressions which the Mind at the same time cannot refuse to lodg. And we find it can as little forbear being conscious of its own Thoughts or Operations concerning this Object: Thus when my Eyes are found and open, as at this time, I have not only an Idea of the Picture that is before me, but I likewise know, I perceive, and affirm that I see it, I consider it, it pleases me, I wish it were mine. And thus I form, or rather after this manner I have first form'd, the Ideas of *Knowing*, *Perceiving*, *Affirming*, *Denying*, *Considering*, *Willing*, *Desiring*, and the Ideas of all the other Operations of the Mind, which are thus occasion'd by the Antecedent Impressions of sensible Objects.

5. By the word **IDEA** which I make **Ch. 2.** so much use of here, and shall more frequently in the following Discourse, I understand *the immediate Object of the Mind when it thinks, or any Thought that the Mind employs about any thing, whether such a Thought be the Image or Representation of a Body, as is the Idea of a Tree; or whether it be some Sensation occasion'd by any Body, such as are the Ideas of Cold and Heat, of Smells and Tastes; or whether, lastly, it be a meerly intellectual or abstracted Thought, such as are the Ideas of God and created Spirits, of Arguing, of Suspension, of Thinking in general, or the like.*

C H A P. II.

Wherein REASON consists.

6. **B**UT altho these simple and distinct Ideas, thus laid up in the great Repository of the Understanding, be not, as was observ'd, what we call strictly *Reason*, yet they are the sole Matter and Foundation of all our

Se^{ct}. I. our Reasoning : For the Mind does upon
 ~~~~~ occasion compare them together, compound  
 them into complex Ideas, and enlarge, contract, or separate them, as  
 it discovers their Circumstances capable or not. So that all our Knowledge  
 is, in effect, nothing else but *the Perception of the Agreement or Disagree-*  
*ment of our Ideas in a greater or lesser*  
*Number, whereinsoever this Agreement*  
*or Disagreement may consist.* And be-  
 cause this Perception is immediate or  
 mediate, our Knowledge is twofold.

7. First, *When the Mind, without*  
*the Assistance of any other Idea, imme-*  
*diately perceives the Agreement or Dis-*  
*agreement of two or more Ideas, as that*  
*Two and Two is Four, that Red is not*  
*Blew ; it cannot be call'd Reason, tho*  
*it be the highest Degree of Evidence :*  
 For here's no need of Discourse or  
 Probation, *Self-evidence* excluding all  
 manner of Doubt and Darkness. Pro-  
 positions so clear of themselves as to  
 want no Proofs, their Terms being once  
 understood, are commonly known by  
 the Names of *Axioms* and *Maxims*.  
 And it is visible that their Number is  
 indefinite, and not confin'd only to two  
 or

or three abstracted Propositions made Ch. 2.  
(as all *Axioms* are) from the Observa-  
tion of particular Instances ; as, that  
*the Whole is greater than any Part*, that  
*Nothing can have no Properties*.

8. But, Secondly, *when the Mind cannot immediately perceive the Agreement or Disagreement of any Ideas, because they cannot be brought near enough together, and so compar'd, it applys one or more intermediate Ideas to discover it* : as, when by the successive Application of a Line to two distant Houses, I find how far they agree or disagree in Length, which I could not effect with my Eye. Thus from the Force of the Air, and the Room it takes up, I know it has Solidity and Extension ; and that therefore it is as much a Body (tho I cannot see it) as Wood, or Stone, with which it agrees in the said Properties. Here *Solidity* and *Extension* are the Line by which I find *Air* and *Body* are equal, or that Air is a Body ; because Solidity and Extension agree to both. We prove the least imaginable Particle of Matter divisible, by shewing all Bodies to be divisible ; because every Particle of Matter is likewise

Sect. I. wise a Body : and after the like manner, is the *Mortality* of all living Bodies inferr'd from their *Divisibility*. This Method of Knowledg is properly call'd *Reason* or *Demonstration*, (as the former *Self-evidence* or *Intuition*); and it may be defin'd, *That Faculty of the Soul which discovers the Certainty of any thing dubious or obscure, by comparing it with something evidently known.*

9. From this Definition it is plain, that the *intermediate Idea* can be no Proof where its Agreement with both the Ideas of the Question is not evident; and that if more than one Idea be necessary to make it appear, the same Evidence is requir'd in each of them. For if the Connection of all the Parts of a *Demonstration* were not indubitable, we could never be certain of the Inference or Conclusion whereby we join the two Extreams: So tho *Self-evidence* excludes *Reason*, yet all *Demonstration* becomes at length *self-evident*. It is yet plainer, that when we have no *Notions* or *Ideas* of a thing, we cannot reason about it at all; and where we have *Ideas*, if *intermediate ones*, to shew their constant and necessary Agreement or Disagree-



agreement, fail us, we can never go be- Ch. 2.  
 yond Probability. Tho we have an Idea of *inhabited*, and an Idea of the *Moon*, yet we have no intermediate Idea to shew such a necessary Connection between them, as to make us certainly conclude that *this Planet is inhabited*, however likely it may seem. Now, *since PROBABILITY is not KNOWLEDG*, I banish all *HYPOTHESES* from my *PHILOSOPHY*; because if I admit never so many, yet my *Knowledge is not a jot increas'd*: for no evident Connection appearing between my Ideas, I may possibly take the wrong side of the Question to be the right, which is equal to knowing nothing of the Matter. When I have arriv'd at *Knowledge*, I enjoy all the Satisfaction that attends it; where I have only *Probability*, there I suspend my Judgment, or, if it be worth the Pains, I search after Certainty.

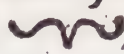
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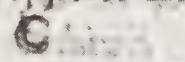


## C H A P. III.

*Of the Means of INFORMATION.*

10. **B**UT besides these Properties of Reason which we have explain'd, we are yet most carefully to distinguish in it *the Means of Information*, from *the Ground of Perswasion*: for the Neglect of this easy distinction has thrown Men into infinite Mistakes; as I shall prove before I have done. *The Means of Information* I call those Ways whereby any thing comes barely to our Knowledge, without necessarily commanding our Assent. By the *Ground of Perswasion*, I understand that Rule by which we judge of all Truth, and which irresistibly convinces the Mind. The *Means of Information* are *EXPERIENCE* and *AUTHORITY*: *Experience* (as you may see N<sup>o</sup> 4.) is either external, which furnishes us with the Ideas of sensible Objects; or internal, which helps us to the Ideas of the Operations of our own Minds. This is the common Stock of  
all

all our Knowledg; nor can we possi- Ch. 3.  
bly have Ideas any other way without  
new Organs or Faculties. 

11. *Authority*, abusively so call'd, as if all its Informations were to be receiv'd without Examen, is either *Humane* or *Divine*: *Humane Authority* is call'd also *Moral Certitude*; as when I believe an intelligible Relation made by my Friend, because I have no Reason to suspect his Veracity, nor he any Interest to deceive me. Thus all possible Matters of Fact, duly attested by credible Persons as known to them, and successively related by others of different Times, Nations, or Interests, who could neither be impos'd upon themselves, nor be justly suspected of combining together to deceive others, ought to be receiv'd by us for as certain and indubitable as if we had seen them with our own Eyes, or heard them with our own Ears. By this means it is, I believe there was such a City as Carthage, such a Reformer as Luther, and that there is such a Kingdom as Poland. When all these Rules concur in any Matter of Fact, I take it then for Demonstration, which is nothing else but Irresistible Evidence from  
 proper



18. Christianity not *Mysterious.*

Sect. I. *proper Proofs:* But where any of these  
Conditions are wanting, the thing is  
*uncertain*, or, at best, but *probable*, which,  
with me, are not very different.


12. The *Authority of God, or Divine Revelation*, is the Manifestation of Truth by Truth it self, to whom it is impossible to lie: Whereof at large in Ch. 2. of the following Section. Nothing in Nature can come to our Knowledge but by some of these four means, viz. *The Experience of the Senses, the Experience of the Mind, Humane and Divine Revelation.*

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C H A P. IV.

*Of the Ground of PERSWASION.*

13. NOW, as we are extreamly  
subject to Deception, we  
may, without some infallible Rule,  
often take a questionable Proposition  
for an *Axiom*, Old Wives Fables for  
*Moral Certitude*, and Humane Impos-  
tures for *Divine Revelation*. This in-  
fallible Rule, or Ground of all right  
*Perswasion*, is *Evidence*; and it consists  
in

in the exact Conformity of our Ideas or Ch. 4.  
Thoughts with their Objects, or the   
Things we think upon. For as we have  
only Ideas in us, and not the Things  
themselves, 'tis by those we must form  
a Judgment of these.

14. Ideas therefore being Representative Beings, their Evidence naturally consists in the Property they have of truly representing their Objects. Not that I think every Idea has a perfect Pattern to represent, as the Ideas of *Length* and *Motion* in my Mind are like the *Length* and *Motion* of the Pen I handle; for some Ideas are but the Result of certain Powers in the Particles of Bodies to OCCASION particular Sensations in us; as the Sweetness of Sugar and the Cold of Ice, are no more inherent in them than Pain in the Knife that cuts me, or Sickness in the Fruit that torments me. But tho such occasional Ideas have no Existence out of our Imagination, yet the Pleasure, Pain, and other Qualities they excite, shew us the Good or Harm their Subjects may do us; which renders the Knowledge of them as useful as that of the Properties which really exist in the Things

Sect. I.



16. But God the wiſe Creator of all, (ever to be nam'd and thought upon with Reverence) who has enabl'd us to perceive things, and form Judgments of them, has alſo endu'd us with the Power of *ſuſpending our Judgments about whatever is uncertain, and of never aſſenting but to clear Perceptions.* He is ſo far from putting us upon any Neceſſity of erring, that as he has thus privileg'd us on the one hand with a Faculty of guarding our ſelves againſt Prepoſſeſſion, or Precipitation, by *placing our Liberty only in what is indiffer-ent, or dubious and obſcure*; ſo he provides on the other hand, that we ſhould diſcern and imbrace the Truth, by *taking it out of our Power to diſſent from an evident Propoſition.* We muſt neceſſarily believe, that *it is impoſſible the ſame thing ſhould be and not be at once*: Nor can all the World perſwade us to doubt of it. But we need not admit that there's no Void in Nature, or that the Earth abſolves an annual Courſe about the Sun, till we get *Demonſtrations* to that Effect.

17. If People precipitate their Aſſent, either becauſe they find the Search of  
Truth



*Truth attended with more Difficulties* Ch. 4.

*than they are willing to run through, or because they would not seem to be ignorant of any thing, this is their fault. Wherefore let us attribute all our false Notions to our own Anticipation and Inattention: Let us confess our De-* <sup>2 Pet. 2. 1.</sup>  
*struction to be of our selves; and cheerfully thank our kind Disposer, who has put us under a Law of bowing before the Light and Majesty of Evidence. And truly if we might doubt of any thing that is clear, or be deceiv'd by distinct Conceptions, there could be nothing certain: Neither Conscience, nor God himself, should be regarded: No Society or Government could subsist. But it is as true, that if we could not suspend our Assent to dubious or obscure Propositions, Almighty Goodness (which is impossible) should be the real Cause of all our Errors.*

18. If it should be ask'd, why Assent is deny'd to true Propositions, since Evidence necessarily requires it? I answer, 'tis because they are not made evident: For Perspicuity and Obscurity are relative Terms, and what is either to me may be the quite contrary

**Sect. I.** the same, very many affirm, that tho  
 the Doctrines of the latter cannot in  
 themselves be contradictory to the  
 Principles of the former, as proceeding  
 both from God ; yet, that according to  
 our Conceptions of them, *they may seem*  
*directly to clash :* And that tho we can-  
 not reconcile them by reason of our  
 corrupt and limited Understandings;  
 yet that from the Authority of *Di-*  
*vine Revelation*, we are bound to be-  
 lieve and acquiesce in them; or, as the  
*Fathers* taught 'em to speak, to adore  
*what we cannot comprehend.*

## C H A P. I.

*The Absurdity and Effects of ad-*  
*mitting any real or seeming Con-*  
*tradictions in RELIGION.*

2. **T**HIS famous and admirable  
 Doctrine is the undoubted  
 Source of all the *Absurdities* that ever  
 were seriously vented among *Christi-*  
*ans.* Without the Pretence of it, we  
 should never hear of the *Transubstan-*  
*tiation*,

tion, and other ridiculous Fables of Ch. 1. the Church of Rome; nor of any of the *Eastern Ordures*, almost all receiv'd into this *Western Sink*: Nor should we be ever banter'd with the *Lutheran Impanation*, or the *Ubiquity* it has produc'd, as one Monster ordinarily begets another. And tho the *Socinians* disown this Practice, I am mistaken if either they or the *Arians* can make their Notions of a *dignifi'd and Creature-God* capable of *Divine Worship*, appear more reasonable than the Extravagancies of other Sects touching the Article of the *Trinity*.

3. In short, this Doctrine is the known Refuge of some Men, when they are at a loss in explaining any Passage of the Word of God. Lest they should appear to others less knowing than they would be thought, they make nothing of fathering that upon the secret Counsels of the Almighty, or the Nature of the Thing, which is, it may be, the Effect of Inaccurate Reasoning, Unskillfulness in the Tongues, or Ignorance of History. But more commonly it is the Consequence of *early Impressions*, which they dare seldom



**SECT. II.** dom afterwards correct by more free  
 ~~~~~ and riper Thoughts : So *desiring to be*

1 Tim. 1. 7. *Teachers of the Law, and understanding
 neither what they say, nor those things
 which they affirm, they obtrude upon us*

Mat. 15. 9. *for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*

And truly well they may ; for if we once admit this Principle, I know not what we can deny that is told us in the Name of the Lord. This Doctrine, I must remark it too, does highly concern us of the *Laity* ; for however it came to be first establish'd, the *Clergy* (always excepting such as deserve it) have not been since wanting to themselves, but improv'd it so far as not only to make the plainest, but the most trifling things in the World *mysterious*, that we might constantly depend upon them for the Explication. And nevertheless, they must not, if they could, explain them to us, without ruining their own Design, let them never so fairly pretend it. But, overlooking all Observations proper for this Place, let us enter upon the immediate Examen of the Opinion it self.

4. The first thing I shall insist upon is, that if any Doctrine of the *New Testa-*

Testament be contrary to Reason, we Ch. 1.
have no manner of Idea of it. To
say for instance, that *a Ball is white
and black at once*, isto say just nothing ;
for these Colours are so incompatible
in the same Subject, as to exclude all
Possibility of a real positive Idea or
Conception. So to say, as the *Papists*,
that *Children dying before Baptism are
damn'd without Pain*, signifies nothing
at all : For if they be intelligent Crea-
tures in the other World, to be eter-
nally excluded God's Presence, and
the Society of the Blessed, must prove
ineffable Torment to them : But if
they think they have no Understand-
ing, then they are not capable of
Damnation in their Sense ; and so they
should not say they are in *Limbo-
Dungeon*, but that either they had no
Souls, or were annihilated ; which
(had it been true, as they can never
shew) would be reasonable enough,
and easily conceiv'd. Now if we have
no Ideas of a thing, it is certainly but
lost Labour for us to trouble our selves
about it : For what I don't conceive,
can no more give me right Notions of
God, or influence my Actions, than

Sect. II. a Prayer deliver'd in an unknown

 Tongue can excite my Devotion: If

1 Cor. 14. *the Trumpet gives an uncertain Sound,*
8, 9. *who shall prepare himself to the Battel?*

And except Words easy to be understood
be utter'd, how shall it be known what is
spoken? Syllables, tho never so well


put together, if they have not Ideas
Ver. 9. fix'd to them, are but *Words spoken in*
the Air; and cannot be the Ground of

Rom. 12. 1. *a reasonable Service, or Worship.*

5. If any should think to evade the
Difficulty by saying, that the Ideas of
certain Doctrines may be contrary in-
deed to common Notions, yet consi-
sistent with themselves, and I know
not what supra-Intellectual Truths, he's
but just where he was. But supposing
a little that the thing were so; it still
follows, that none can understand these
Doctrines except their Perceptions be
communicated to him in an extraor-
dinary manner, as by new Powers and
Organs. And then too, others cannot
be edifi'd by what is discours'd of 'em,
unless they enjoy the same Favour. So
that if I would go preach the Gospel
to the *Wild Indians*, I must expect the
Ideas of my Words should be, I know
not

not how, infus'd into their Souls in Ch. 1.
 order to apprehend me: and according to this Hypothesis, they could no more, without a Miracle, understand my Speech than the chirping of Birds; and if they knew not the Meaning of my ^{1 Cor. 14.} Voice, I should even to them be a Barbarian, notwithstanding I spoke Mysteries ^{11.} Ver. 2. in the Spirit: But what do they mean by consisting with themselves, yet not with our common Notions? Four may be call'd Five in Heaven; but so, the Name only is chang'd, the Thing remains still the same. And since we cannot in this World know any thing but by our common Notions, how shall we be sure of this pretended Consistency between our present seeming Contradictions, and the Theology of the World to come? for as 'tis by Reason we arrive at the Certainty of God's own Existence, so we cannot otherwise discern his Revelations but by their Conformity with our natural Notices of him, which is in so many words, to agree with our common Notions.

6. The next thing I shall remark is, That those, who stick not to say they could believe a downright Contradiction


Sect. II. *to Reason, did they find it contain'd to the*
 *Scripture, do justify all Absurdities*
 whatsoever; and, by opposing one
 Light to another, undeniably make
 God the Author of all Incertitude.
 The very Supposition, that Reason
 might authorize one thing, and the
 Spirit of God another, throws us into
 inevitable *Scepticism*; for we shall be
 at a perpetual Uncertainty which to ob-
 bey: Nay, we can never be sure which
 is which. For the Proof of the Di-
 vinity of *Scripture* depending upon
 Reason, If the clear Light of the one
 might be any way contradicted, how
 shall we be convinc'd of the Infalibility
 of the other? Reason may err in this
 Point as well as in any thing else; and
 we have no particular Promise it shall
 not, no more than the *Papists* that
 their Senses may not deceive them in
 every thing as well as in *Transubstantia-*
tion. To say it bears witness to it self,
 is equally to establish the *Alcoran* or
 the *Poran*. And 'twere a notable Ar-
 gument to tell a *Heathen*, that the
Church has declar'd it, when all So-
 cieties will say as much for themselves,
 if we take their word for it. Besides,

It may be, he would ask whence the *Church* had Authority to decide this Matter? And if it should be answer'd from the *Scripture*, a thousand to one but he would divert himself with this Circle. You must believe that the *Scripture* is Divine, because the *Church* has so determin'd it, and the *Church* has this deciding Authority from the *Scripture*. 'Tis doubted if this Power of the *Church* can be prov'd from the Passages alledg'd to that purpose; but the *Church* it self (a Party concern'd) affirms it. Hey-day! are not these eternal Rounds very exquisite Inventions to giddy and entangle the Unthinking and the Weak?

7. But if we believe the *Scripture* to be Divine, not upon its own bare Assertion, but from a real Testimony consisting in the Evidence of the things contain'd therein; from undoubted Effects; and not from Words and Letters; what is this but to prove it by Reason? It has in it self, I grant, the brightest Characters of Divinity: But 'tis Reason finds them out, examines them, and by its Principles approves and pronounces them sufficient; which

Sect. II. orderly begets in us an Acquiescence
 of *Faith* or Perswasion. Now if Particulars be thus severely sifted ; if not only the Doctrine of *Christ* and his *Apostles* be consider'd, but also their Lives , Predictions , Miracles , and Deaths ; surely all this Labour would be in vain, might we upon any account dispense with Contradictions. O ! blessed and commodious System, that dischargest at one stroak those troublesome Remarks about History, Language, figurative and literal Senses, Scope of the Writer, Circumstances, and other Helps of Interpretation ! We judg of a Man's Wisdom and Learning by his Actions, and his Discourses ; but God, who we are assur'd
 Acts 14.17. *has not left himself without a Witness,* must have no Privileges above the maddest Enthusiast, or the *Devil* himself, at this rate.

8. But a Veneration for the very Words of God will be pretended : This we are pleas'd with ; for we know
 Numb. 23. *that God is not a Man that he should lie.*
 19. But the Question is not about the Words, but their Sense, which must be ever worthy of their Author, and there-

therefore according to the Genius of all Ch. 1.
Speech, figuratively interpreted, when 
occasion requires it. Otherwise, under
pretence of *Faith in the Word of God*,
the highest Follies and Blasphemies
may be deduc'd from the Letter of
Scripture; as, that God is subject to
Passions, is the Author of Sin, that
Christ is a Rock, was actually guilty
of and defil'd with our Transgressions,
that we are Worms or Sheep, and no
Men. And if a Figure be admitted in
these Passages, why not, I pray, in all
Expressions of the like Nature, when
there appears an equal Necessity for
it?

9. It may be demanded why I have
so long insisted upon this Article, since
that none expressly makes *Scripture* and
Reason contradictory, was acknow-
ledg'd before? But in the same place
mention is made of some who hold,
that *they may seem directly to clash*; and
that tho we cannot reconcile them to-
gether, yet that we are bound to ac-
quiesce in the Decisions of the former.
A seeming Contradiction is to us as
much as a real one; and our Respect
for the *Scripture* does not require us to

Sect. II. grant any such in it; but rather to conclude, that we are ignorant of the right Meaning when a Difficulty occurs; and so to *suspend our Judgment concerning it, till with futable Helps and Industry we discover the Truth.* As for acquiescing in what a Man understands not, or cannot reconcile to his Reason, they know best the fruits of it that practise it. For my part, I'm a Stranger to it, and cannot reconcile my self to such a Principle. On the contrary, I am pretty sure *he pretends in vain to convince the Judgment; who explains not the Nature of the Thing.* A Man may give his verbal Assent to he knows not what, out of *Fear, Superstition, Indifference, Intérest,* and the like feeble and unfair Motives: but as long as he conceives not what he believes, he cannot sincerely acquiesce in it, and remains depriv'd of all solid Satisfaction. He is constantly perplex'd with Scruples not to be remov'd by his *implicite Faith*; and so is ready to be shaken, and *carry'd away with every wind of Doctrine.* I will believe because I will believe, that is, *because I'm in the Humour so to do, is the top of his Apology.*

Ephes. 4.

14.

logy. Such are unreasonable Men, *Ch. 1.*
walking after the Vanity of their Minds,
having their Understandings darkn'd, *Ephes. 4.*
being Strangers to the Life of God *17, 18.*
through the Ignorance that is in them,
because of the Hardness of their Hearts.
 But he that comprehends a thing, is as
 sure of it as if he were himself the Au-
 thor. He can never be brought to
 suspect his Profession ; and, if he be
 honest, will always render a pertinent
 account of it to others.

10. The natural Result of what has
 been said is, That to believe the Divi-
 nity of *Scripture*, or the Sense of any
 Passage thereof, without rational
 Proofs, and an evident Consistency, is
 a blameable Credulity, and a temera-
 rious Opinion, ordinarily grounded
 upon an ignorant and wilful Disposi-
 tion, but more generally maintain'd
 out of a gainful Prospect. For we
 frequently embrace certain Doctrines
 not from any convincing Evidence in
 them, but because they serve our De-
 signs better than the Truth ; and be-
 cause other Contradictions we are not
 willing to quit, are better defended by
 their means.

C H A P. II.

*Of the Authority of REVELATION,
as it regards this Controversy.*

11. **A** Gainst all that we have been establishing in this Section, *the Authority of Revelation* will be alledg'd with great shew, as if without a Right of silencing or extinguishing REASON, it were altogether useless and impertinent. But if the Distinction I made in the precedent Section, N. 9. be well consider'd, the Weakness of the present Objection will quickly appear, and this Controversy be better understood hereafter. There I said REVELATION was not a necessitating Motive of Assent, but *a Mean of Information*. We should not confound the Way whereby we come to the knowledg of a thing, with the Grounds we have to believe it. A Man may inform me concerning a thousand Matters I never heard of before, and of which I should not as much as think if

I were not told ; yet I believe nothing Ch. 2.
purely upon his word without *Evi-*
dence in the things themselves. Not the
bare Authority of him that speaks, but
the clear Conception I form of what he
says, is the *Ground of my Perswasion*.

12. If the sincerest Person on Earth
should assure me he saw a Cane with-
out two ends, I neither should nor
could believe him ; because this Rela-
tion plainly contradicts the Idea of a
Cane. But if he told me he saw a Staff
that, being by chance laid in the Earth,
did after some time put forth Sprigs
and Branches, I could easily rely upon
his Veracity ; because this no way con-
tradicts the Idea of a Staff, nor tran-
scends Possibility.

13. I say *Possibility* ; for *Omnipoten-*
cy it self can do no more. They impose
upon themselves and others, who re-
quire Assent to things contradictory,
because *God*, say they, *can do all things*,
and it were limiting of his Power to af-
firm the contrary. Very good ! we
heartily believe God can do all things :
But that meer NOTHING should be
the Object of his Power, the very *Om-*
nipotency alledg'd will not permit us to

Sect II. conceive, And that every *Contradiction*, which is a Synonym for *Impossibility*, is *pure nothing*, we have already sufficiently demonstrated. To say, for example, that *a thing is extended and not extended, is round and square at once*, is to say *nothing*; for these Ideas destroy one another, and cannot subsist together in the same Subject. But when we clearly perceive a perfect Agreement and Connection between the Terms of any Proposition, we then conclude it possible because intelligible: So I understand God may render immediately solid, what has been hitherto fluid; make present Beings cease to exist or change their Forms; and call

Rom. 4. 17. *those things that are not, as tho they were.*

When we say then, *that nothing is impossible with God*, or that he can do all things, we mean whatever is possible in it self, however far above the Power of Creatures to effect.

14. Now, such is the Nature of a Matter of Fact, that tho it may be conceiv'd possible enough, yet he only can with Assurance assert its Existence who is himself the Author, or by some Means of Information comes first to the

the certain knowledg of it. That there Ch. 2.
 was such an Island as *Jamaica*, no *Eu-
 ropean* could ever reasonably deny : ~
 And yet that it was precisely situated
 in such a Latitude, was water'd with
 those Rivers, cloth'd with these
 Woods, bore this Grain, produc'd that
 Plant, no *English-man* before the Dis-
 covery of *America*, could positively
 affirm.

15. Thus God is pleas'd to reveal
 to us in *Scripture* several wonderful
 Matters of Fact, as *the Creation of the
 World, the last Judgment*, and many
 other important Truths, which no Man
 left to himself could ever imagine, no
 more than any of my fellow-Creatures
 can be sure of my private Thoughts :

For who knoweth the things of a Man 1 Cor. 2. 11,
save the Spirit of a Man that is in him ?

even so the things of God knoweth none
but the Spirit of God. But as secret things Deut. 29,
belong unto the Lord ; so those things 29.

which are reveal'd, belong unto us and to
our Children. Yet, as we discours'd be-
 fore, we do not receive them only be-
 cause they are reveal'd : For *besides the*
infallible Testimony of the Revelation
from all requisite Circumstances, we must

see

Sect. II see in its Subject the indisputable Characters of **DIVINE WISDOM** and **SOUND REASON**; which are the only Marks we have to distinguish the Oracles and Will of God, from the Impostures and Traditions of Men.

16. *Whoever reveals any thing, that is, whoever tells us something we did not know before, his Words must be intelligible, and the Matter possible.* This **RULE** holds good, let God or Man be the Revealer. If we count that Person a Fool who requires our Assent to what is manifestly incredible, how dare we blasphemously attribute to *the most perfect Being*, what is an acknowledg'd Defect in one of our selves? As for unintelligible Relations, we can no more believe them from the Revelation of God, than from that of Man; for the conceiv'd Ideas of things are the only Subjects of Believing, Denying, Approving, and every other Act of the Understanding: Therefore all Matters reveal'd by God or Man, must be equally intelligible and possible; so far both Revelations agree. But in this they differ, that tho the Revelation of Man should be thus qualify'd, yet he may impose

impose upon me as to the Truth of the thing; whereas what God is pleas'd to discover to me is not only clear to my Reason, (without which his Revelation could make me no wiser) but likewise *it is always true*. A Man, for Example, acquaints me that he has found a Treasure: This is plain and possible, but he may easily deceive me. God assures me, that he has form'd Man of Earth: This is not only possible to God, and to me very intelligible; but the thing is also most certain, *God not being capable to deceive me, as Man is*. We are then to expect the same degree of *Perspicuity* from God as from Man, tho more of *Certitude* from the first than the last.

17. This Reason perswades, and the Scriptures expressly speak it. Those *Prophets* or *Dreamers* were to be ston'd to Death that should go about to seduce the People from the Worship of One God to * *Polytheism*, tho they should confirm their Doctrine by *Signs and Wonders*. And tho a Prophet spoke in the Name of the Lord, yet if the thing.

Deut. 13.
1, 2, 3.
prophe-

* The Service of many Gods.

Sect. II. *propheſi'd did not come to paſs, it waſt to be a rational Sign he ſpoke preſumptu-*

Deut. 18. ouſly of himſelf, and not of God. It
21, 22.

was reveal'd to the Prophet Jeremy in

Prison, that his Uncle's Son would ſell

Jer. 32. 7. 8. his Field to him, but he did not conclude

it to be the Word of the Lord till his

Kinſman actually came to ſtrike the Bar-

gain with him. The Virgin MART,

tho of that Sex that's leaſt Proof a-

gainſt Flattery and Superſtition, did

not implicitly believe ſhe ſhould bear a

Child that waſt to be call'd the Son of the

moſt High, and of whoſe Kingdom there

ſhould be no end, till the Angel gave her

a ſatisfactory Answer to the ſtrongest

Objection that could be made: Nor

did ſhe then conclude (ſo unlike waſt

ſhe to her preſent Worſhippers) it

Luke 1.
34, 35.

Ver. 38.

18. In how many places are we ex-

horted to beware of falſe Prophets and

Teachers, Seducers and Deceivers? We

are not only to prove or try all things,

and to hold faſt that which is beſt, but

also to try the Spirits whether they be of
God.

Mat. 7. 14.

2 Tim. 3.


13.

Tit. 1. 10.

1 Theſſ. 5.

21.

1 Joh. 4. 1.

God. But how shall we try? how Ch. 2.
shall we discern? Not *as the Horse and* 
Mule which have no Understanding, but ^{Psal. 32.9.}
as circumspect and wise Men, judging ^{Eph. 5.15.}
what is said. In a word, it was from ^{1 Cor. 10.}
clear and weighty Reasons, both as to
Fact and Matter, and not by a blind O-
bedience, that the Men of God of old
embrac'd his Revelations, which on the
like Account we are willing to receive
of their hands. I am not ignorant how
some boast they are strongly perswaded
by the illuminating and efficacious Opera-
tion of the Holy Spirit, and that they
neither have nor approve other Reasons
of their *FAITH*: But we shall en-
deavour in its proper place to unde-
ceive them; for no Adversary, how
absurd or trifling soever, ought to be
superciliously disregarded by an un-
feign'd Lover of Men and Truth. So
far of REVELATION; only in ma-
king it a *Mean of Information*, I fol-
low *Paul* himself, who tells the *Corin-*
thians, that *he cannot profit them except*
he speaks to them by Revelation, or by ^{1 Cor. 14.6.}
Knowledg, or by Prophefying, or by
Doctrine.



C H A P. III.

That by CHRISTIANITY was intended a Rational and Intelligible Religion; prov'd from the Miracles, Method and Stile of the New Testament.

19. **W**HAT we discours'd of REASON before, and REVELATION now, being duly weigh'd, all the Doctrines and Precepts of the New Testament (if it be indeed Divine) must consequently agree with *Natural Reason*, and our own ordinary Ideas. This every considerate and wel-dispos'd Person will find by the careful perusal of it : And whoever undertakes this Task, will confess the Gospel *not to be hidden from us, nor afar off, but very nigh us, in our Mouths, and in our Hearts.* It affords the most illustrious Examples of close and perspicuous Ratiocination conceivable; which is incumbent on me in the

Deut. 30.
II, 14.

the Explication of its MYSTERIES, Ch. 3.
to demonstrate. And tho the Evi-
dence of *Christ's* Doctrine might claim
the Approbation of the *Gentiles*, and
its Conformity with the Types and
Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, with
all the Marks of the *MESSIAH* con-
curring in his Person, might justly
challenge the Assent of his Country-
men; yet to leave no room for doubt,
he proves his Authority and Gospel by
such Works, and Miracles as the stiff-
neck'd *Jews* themselves could not deny
to be Divine. *Nicodemus* says to him,
No Man can do these Miracles which thou Joh. 3. 2.
do'st, except God be with him. Some of
the Pharisees acknowledg'd *no Sinner* Joh. 9. 16.
could do such things. And others, that
they exceeded the Power of the Devil. Joh. 10. 21.

20. *JESUS* himself appeals to his
very Enemies, ready to Stone him for
pretended Blasphemy, saying; *If I do* Joh. 10.
not the Works of my Father, believe me 37, 38.
not: But if I do, believe not me, believe
the Works; that you may know, and believe
that the Father is in me, and I in him:
That is, believe not rashly on me, and so
give a Testimony to my Works; but
search the Scriptures, which testify of
the

Sect. II. the *Messiah*; consider the Works I do, whether they be such as become God, and are attributed to him: If they be, then conclude and believe that I am he, &c. In effect, several of the People said, that Christ when he should come could do no greater wonders; and many of the Jews believ'd, when they saw the Miracles which he did.

21. How shall we escape, says the Apostle, if we neglect so great a Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own Will? Those who heard Christ, the Author of our Religion, speak, and saw the Wonders which he wrought, renounce all the hidden things of Dishonesty, all Craftiness and deceitful handling of the Word of God: And that they manifest nothing but Truth, they commend themselves to every Man's Conscience, that is, they appeal to every Man's Reason, in the Sight of God. Peter exhorts Christians to be ready always to give an Answer to every one that asks them a Reason of their Hope. Now to what purpose

purpose serv'd all these Miracles, all Ch. 3. these Appeals, if no Regard was to be had of Mens Understandings? if the Doctrines of *Christ* were incomprehensible, contradictory; or were we oblig'd to believe reveal'd Nonsense? Now if these Miracles be true, *Christianity* must consequently be intelligible; and if false, (which our Adversaries will not grant) they can be then no Arguments against us.

22. But to insist no longer upon such Passages, all Men will own the Verity I defend, if they read the sacred Writings with that Equity and Attention that is due to meer Humane Works: Nor is there any different Rule to be follow'd in the Interpretation of *Scripture* from what is common to all other Books. Whatever unprejudic'd Person shall use those Means, will find them notorious Deceivers, or much deceiv'd themselves, who maintain the *New Testament* is written without any Order or certain Scope, but just as Matters came into the *Apostles* Heads, whether transported with Enthusiastick Fits, (as some will have it) or, according to others;

Sect. II. for lack of good Sense and a liberal Education. I think I may justly say, that they are Strangers to true Method, who complain of this Confusion and Disorder. But the Proof of the Case depends not upon Generalities: Tho, whenever it is prov'd, I will not promise that every one shall find a Justification of the *particular Method* he was taught, or he has chosen, to follow. *To defend any PARTY is not my business, but to discover the TRUTH.*

23. The Facility of the GOSPEL is not confin'd only to Method; for the Style is also most easy, most natural, and in the common Dialect of those to whom it was immediately consign'd. Should any preach in *Xenophon's* strain to the present *Greeks*, or in correct *English* to the Country-People in *Scotland*, 'twould cost them much more Time and Pains to learn the very Words, than the Knowledge of the Things denoted by them. Of old, as well as in our time, the *Jews* understood *Hebrew* worse than the Tongues of those Regions where they dwelt. No Pretences therefore can be

be drawn from the Obscurity of the Ch. 3.
 Language in favour of the *irrational* ~~~~~
Hypothesis: for all Men are suppos'd
 to understand the daily Use of their
 Mother-Tongue; whereas the Stile of
 the Learned is unintelligible to the
 Vulgar. And the plainest Authors
 that write as they speak, without the
 Disguise of pompous Elegance, have
 ever been accounted the best by all
 good Judges. It is a visible Effect of
 Providence that we have in our Hands
 the Monuments of the *Old Testament*,
 which in the *New* are always suppos'd,
 quoted, or alluded to. Nor is that all,
 for the *Jewish* Service and Customs
 continue to this day. If this had been
 true of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, we
 should be furnish'd with those Helps
 to understand aright many unknown
 Particulars of their Religion, which
 make us Rulers and Teachers in *Israel*.
 Besides, we have the *Talmud*, and o-
 ther Works^s of the *Rabbins*, which,
 however otherwise useless, give us no
 small Light into the antient Rites and
 Language. And if after all we should
 be at a loss about the Meaning of any
 Expression, we ought rather to charge

Sect. II. it upon Distance of Time, and the want of more Books in the same Tongue, than to attribute it to the Nature of the thing, or the Ignorance of the Author, who might be easily understood by his Country-men and Contemporaries. But no Truth is to be establish'd, nor Falshood confuted from such Passages, no more than any can certainly divine his Fortune from the sound of *Bow-bell*.

24. If any object, that the *Gospel* is penn'd with little or no Ornament, that there are no choice of Words, nor studi'd Expressions in it; the Accusation is true, and the Apostles themselves acknowledg it: nor is there a more palpable Demonstration of their having design'd to be understood by
 1 Cor. 2. 1. all. *I came not to you, says Paul, with Excellency of Speech, or Wisdom, declaring unto you the Testimony of God.*
 Ver. 4. *My Speech and my Preaching was not with enticing Words of Humane Wisdom, but in Demonstration, or Conviction of the Spirit or Mind, and in Power or Efficacy.* This he speaks in reference to the *Philosophers* and *Orators* of those Times, whose Elocution, 'tis confess'd, was

was curious, and Periods elaborate, Ch. 3.
apt to excite the Admiration of the Hearers, but not to satisfy their Reasons; charming indeed their Senses whilst in the *Theatre*, or the *Temple*, but making them neither the better at home, nor the wiser abroad.

25. These Men, as well as many of their *modern Successors*, were fond enough of their own ridiculous Systems, *to count the things of God Foolishness*, ^{1 Cor. 2.} because they did not agree with their precarious and sensual Notions; because every Sentence was not wrapp'd up in *Mystery*, and garnish'd with a Figure: not considering that only false or trivial Matters need the Assistance of alluring Harangues to perplex or amuse. But they were Enemies and Strangers to the Simplicity of Truth. *All their Study*, as we took notice, *lay in tickling the Passions of the People at their Pleasure with bombast Eloquence, and apish Gesticulations*. They boasted their Talent of perswading for or against any thing. And as he was esteem'd the best *Orator* that made the worst Cause appear the most equitable before the Judges, so he was the

14-

Sect. II. best *Philosopher* that could get the wildest Paradox to pass for Demonstration. They were only concern'd about their own Glory and Gain, which they could not otherwise support, but (according to an Artifice that never fails, and therefore ever practis'd) by *imposing upon the People with their Authority and Sophistry, and under pretence of instructing, dexterously detaining them in the grossest Ignorance.*

26. But the Scope of the *Apostles* was very different: Piety towards God, and the Peace of Mankind, was their Gain, and *Christ* and his *Gospel* their Glory; they came not magnifying nor exalting themselves; not imposing but declaring their Doctrine: they did not confound and mislead, but convince the Mind; they were employ'd to dispel Ignorance, to eradicate Superstition, to propagate Truth, and Reformation of Manners; *to preach Deliverance to Captives, (i. e.) the Enjoyment of Christian Liberty to the Slaves, of the Levitical, and Pagan Priesthoods; and to declare Salvation to repenting Sinners.*

Luk. 4. 18.

27. I shall add here some of the *Ch. 3.*
 Characters which *David* gives of the
 Law and Word of God, that we may
 admit nothing as the Will of Heaven
 but what is agreeable to them : *The*
Law of the Lord, says he, *is perfect,*
converting the Soul. The Testimony of
the Lord is sure, making wise the Simple.
The Statutes of the Lord are right, re-
joicing the Heart. The Commandment
of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes.
The Fear of the Lord is clean, enduring
for ever. The Judgments of the Lord
are true, and righteous altogether. I have
more Understanding than all my Teachers,
for thy Testimonies are my Meditation.
I understand more than the Antients, be-
cause I keep thy Precepts. Thy Word is
a Lamp unto my Feet, and a Light unto
my Path. The New Testament is so
 full of this Language, and the Con-
 tents of it are every where so confor-
 mable to it, that I shall refer the Rea-
 der to the particular Discussion of the
 Whole in the *second Discourse*. But I
 must remark in the meantime that
 not a Syllable of this Language is
 true, if any Contradictions *seeming* or
real be admitted in Scripture. As much

Sect. II. may be said of *Mysteries*; but we shall
 talk of that by and by.

C H A P. IV.

Objections answer'd, drawn from the Pravity of Humane REA- SON.

28. **T**Here remains one Objection yet, upon which some lay a mighty Stress, tho it's like to do them little Service. Granting, say they, the GOSPEL to be as reasonable as you pretend, yet *corrupt and deprav'd Reason can neither discern nor receive Divine Verities*. Ay, but that proves not Divine Verities to be contrary to sound Reason. But they maintain that *no Man's Reason is sound*. Wherefore I hope so to state this Question, as to cut off all Occasion of Dispute from judicious and peaceable Men. Reason taken for the Principle of Discourse in us, or more particularly for *that Faculty every one has of judging of his Ideas*

Ideas according to their Agreement or Ch. 4. Disagreement, and so of loving what seems good unto him, and hating what he thinks evil: Reason, I say, in this Sense is whole and entire in every one whose Organs are not accidentally indispos'd. 'Tis from it that we are accounted Men; and we could neither inform others, nor receive Improvement our selves, any more than Brutes, without it.

29. But if by *Reason* be understood a constant right Use of these Faculties, viz. *If a Man never judges but according to clear Perceptions, desires nothing but what is truly good for him, nor avoids but what is certainly evil: Then, I confess, it is extremely corrupt. We are too prone to frame wrong Conceptions, and as erroneous Judgments of things. We generally covet what flatters our Senses, without distinguishing noxious from innocent Pleasures; and our Hatred is as partial. We gratify our Bodies so much as to meditate little, and think very grossly of spiritual, or abstracted Matters. We are apt to indulge our inclinations, which we term to follow Nature: so* 1 Cor. 2. 14. *that*

Sect. II. that the † *natural Man*, that is, he that gives the swing to his Appetites, counts Divine Things mere Folly, calls Religion a feverish Dream of superstitious Heads, or a politick Trick invented by States-men to awe the credulous Vulgar. For as *they that walk after the Flesh mind the things thereof, so their carnal Wisdom is Enmity against God.*

Rom. 8. 5, 7. *Sin easily besets us. There is a Law in our Members or Body, warring against the Law of our Minds or Reason. And when we would do Good, Evil is present with us.*

Heb. 12. 1. *If thus we become stupid and unfit for earthly Speculations, how shall we believe when we are told of Heavenly things?*

Rom. 7. 23. *when we are told of Heavenly things?*

Ver. 21. *when we are told of Heavenly things?*

Joh. 3. 12. *when we are told of Heavenly things?*

30. But these Disorders are so far from being Reason, that nothing can be more directly contrary to it. We lie under no necessary Fate of sinning. There is no Defect in our Understandings but those of our own Creation, that is to say, *vicious Habits easily contracted, but difficultly reform'd.* 'Tis just with us as with the Drunkard, whose

† *Ψυχός* constantly signifies the animal, and never the natural State of Man. It should be in this Place translated sensual, as it is very rightly, Jam. 3. 15. and Jude, v. 19.

whose *I cannot give over Drinking* is a Ch. 4. deliberate *I will not*. For upon a Wa-ger, or for a Reward, he can forbear his Cups a Day, a Month, a Year, according as the Consideration of the Value or Certainty of the expected Gain do's influence him. *Let no Man* Jam. 1.13, *therefore say when he is tempted, I am* 14. *tempted of God; for as God cannot be tempted to Evil, so neither tempteth he any Man: But every Man is tempted when he is drawn away, and entic'd of his own Lust.*

31. Supposing a natural Impotency to reason well, we could no more be liable to Condemnation for not keeping the Commands of God, than those to whom the Gospel was never revealed for not believing on Christ: For Rom. 10. *how shall they call on him in whom they* 14. *have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?* Were our reasoning Faculties imperfect, or we not capable to employ them rightly, there could be no Possibility of our understanding one another in Millions of things, where the stock of our Ideas should prove unavoidably unequal, or our Capacities different.

Sect. II. different. But 'tis the Perfection of our *Reason* and *Liberty* that makes us deserve Rewards and Punishments. We are perswaded that *all our Thoughts are entirely free, we can expend the Force of Words, compare Ideas, distinguish clear from obscure Conceptions, suspend our Judgments about Uncertainties, and yield only to Evidence.* In a word, the Deliberations we use about our Designs, and the choice to which we determine our selves at last, do prove us the free Disposers of all our Actions. Now what is *sound Reason* except this be it? Doubtless it is. And no *Evangelical*, or other knowable Truth can prove insuperable, or monstrous to him that uses it after this manner. But when we abuse it against it self, and enslave it to our debauch'd Imaginations, it is averse from all Good. We are so habituated, I confess, to precarious and hasty Conclusions, that without great Constancy and Exercise we cannot recover our innate Freedom, *nor* Jer. 13. 23. *do well, having accustom'd our selves so much to Evil.* But tho' 'tis said in *Scripture*, that *we will neither know nor understand*; 'tis there also said, that we may

may amend our Ways, turn from our Ch. 4.
Iniquity, and choose Life. Encourage-
ments are propos'd to such as do so. ~~~~~


We can, upon serious Reflections, see our Faults, and find that what we held most unreasonable, did only appear so from *superficial Disquisitions*, or want of *necessary Helps*; from *Deference to Authority*, and *Principles taken upon Trust*; from *irregular Inclinations* and *Self-interest*, or the *Hatred of a Party*.

32. But notwithstanding all this some are at a world of Pains to rob themselves (if they could) of their *Liberty* or *Freewill*, the noblest and most useful of all our Faculties, the only thing we can properly call ours, and the only thing that neither Power nor Fortune can take from us. Under whatever Vail these Men endeavour to hide their Folly, yet they are engag'd in it by extreme *Pride* and *Self-love*: For, not willing to own their *Ignorance* and *Miscarriages*, (which proceed from *Passion*, *Sloth*, or *Inconsideration*) they would remove all the Blame from their Will, and charge it upon a natural *Impotency* not in their Power to cure. Thus they ingeniously cheat themselves, and
chuse

Sect. II. chuse rather to be rank'd in the same
 ~~~~~ Condition with Brutes or Machines,  
 than be oblig'd to acknowledg their  
 humane Frailties, and to mend.

33. Since therefore the Perfection or Soundness of our Reason is so evident to our selves, and so plainly contain'd in *Scripture*, however wrested by some ignorant Persons, *we should labour to acquire Knowledge with more confident Hopes of Success.* Why should we entertain such mean and unbecoming Thoughts, as if Truth, like the Almighty, dwelt in Light inaccessible, and not to be discover'd by the Sons of Men? Things are always the same, how different soever the Conceptions of Men about them may be; and what another did not, I may happily find out. That nothing escap'd the Sight of former Ages is a Tale to be told where one Person only speaks, and no Body present must contradict him. The Slips and Errors which are taken notice of in the World every Day, serve only to put us in mind that many able Men did not examine the Truth with that Order and Application they should or might have done.

There

There are a thousand things in our Ch. 4.  
 Power to know, of which, through   
 Prejudice or Neglect, we may be, and  
 frequently remain ignorant all our  
 Lives; and innumerable Difficulties  
 may be made by imagining MYSTE-  
 RIES where there are none, or by  
 conceiving too discouraging and unjust  
 an Opinion of our own Abilities:  
 whereas, by a Parity of Reason, we  
 may hope to outdo all that outdid  
 others before us, as Posterity may ex-  
 ceed both. *'Tis no Presumption there-  
 fore for us to endeavour setting things in  
 a better Light*; as to know what we  
 are able to perform is not *Pride*, but  
 foolishly to presume none else can e-  
 qual us, when we are all upon the  
 same Level: *For who maketh thee to* 1 Cor. 4. 7.  
*differ from another? And what hast thou  
 that thou didst not receive? Now if thou  
 didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if  
 thou hadst not receiv'd it? Have we  
 not all the same sure and certain Pro-  
 mises of Light and Assistance from  
 above, as well as the Privilege of Rea-  
 son in common? If any lack Wisdom,  
 let him ask it of God, who gives to all* Jam. 1. 5.  
*Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it  
 shall be given him.* 34. To



Sect.II. 34. To conclude, let no Body think  
 to be excus'd by this imaginary *Cor-*  
*ruption*, but learn from the *Scripture*,  
 our infallible Oracle, that the *Gospel*,  
 if it be the Word of God, is only con-  
 trary to the Opinions and Wishes of  
 2 Pet. 3.3. lewd Men, *that love to walk after their*  
*own Lusts ; of those that speak Evil of*  
*the things which they understand not, and*  
 Jude, v.10. *debauch themselves in what they know in*  
*common with Brutes. It is hid to them*  
 2 Cor. 4. *whose Minds are blinded by the God of*  
 3. 4. *this World ; and to those who live by*  
 the Ignorance and simple Credulity of  
 their Brethren. To be brief, It is  
 contrary to the false Reasoning of all  
 that will not know what it is to re-  
 flect or consider ; but it is not above  
 the Possibility of their *Reason* when  
 they shall better improve their Facul-  
 ties. The Creation of the World was  
 against the System of *Aristotle*, the Im-  
 mortality of the Soul against the Hy-  
 pothesis of *Epicurus*, and the || Liberty  
 of

---

|| *How the absolute Liberty we experience in our selves, is*  
*consistent with God's Omnipotency and our Dependance on*  
*him, shall in due Place be consider'd.*

of the Will was impugned by many Ch. 4.  
antient *Philosophers*. But is this to be  
*contrary to Reason*? Have not these  
Men been quite baff'd by as very  
*Heathens* as themselves? And are not  
their other Errors since detected and  
exploded by most of the Learned?  
Besides, they wanted a principal *mean*  
of Information, viz. *REVELATION*.

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F

SECT.

## S E C T. III.

*That there is nothing MY-  
STERIOUS, or A-  
BOVE Reason in the  
G O S P E L.*

1. **W**E come at length to en-  
quire whether any Do-  
ctrine of the G O S P E L  
be ABOVE, tho not contrary to REA-  
SON. This Expression is taken in a  
twofold Signification. First, It de-  
notes a thing intelligible of it self, but  
so cover'd by figurative Words, Types  
and Ceremonies, that *Reason* cannot  
penetrate the Vail, nor see what is  
under it till it be remov'd. Secondly,  
It is made to signify a thing of its own  
Nature inconceivable, and not to be  
judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties  
and Ideas, tho it be never so clearly  
revealed. In both these Senses *to be*  
*above*



*above Reason* is the same thing with Ch. i. MYSTERY; and, in effect, they are convertible Terms in *Divinity*.

## CHAP. I.

### The History and Signification of MYSTERY in the Writings of the GENTILES.

2. **W**HAT is meant by *REASON* we have already largely discours'd; but to understand aright what the word *MYSTERY* imports, we must trace the Original of it as far back as the Theology of the ancient *Gentiles*; whereof it was a considerable Term. *Those Nations; who* (as *Paul* elegantly describes them) *professing themselves wise, became Fools; who chang'd the Glory of the incorruptible God into the Image and Likeness of corruptible Man, of Birds, of Beasts, and creeping things; who turn'd the Truth of God into a Lie, and worship'd the Creature as well as (and sometimes more than) the Creator: Those Nations, I* Rom. i.  
22, 23, 25.

F 2 lay,

Sect. 3. say, ashamed or afraid to exhibit their *Religion* naked to the view of all indifferently, disguis'd it with various Ceremonies, Sacrifices, Plays, &c. making the superstitious People believe that admirable things were adumbrated by these Externals. The *Priests*, but very rarely, and then obscurely, taught in publick, pretending the Injunctions of their *Divinities* to the contrary, lest their Secrets, forsooth, should be expos'd to the Profanation of the Ignorant, or Violation of the Impious. They perform'd the highest Acts of their Worship, consisting of ridiculous, obscene, or inhumane Rites, in the inmost Recesses of *Temples* or *Groves* consecrated for that purpose : And it was inexpressible Sacrilege for any to \*enter these but such as had a special Mark and Privilege, or as much as to ask Questions about what pass'd in them. All the Excluded were for that Reason stil'd *the PROFANE*, as those not in Orders with us *the LAITY*.

3. But

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\* ——— Procul, O procul este Profani !  
 Conclamat vates, totq; abistite luco, *Virg. l. 6.*  
*Æneid. v. 259.* Callimach. Hymn. in Apol. v. 2.  
 Εἰς τὸν ἱερὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνθρωποι.

3. But the cunning Priests, who Ch. 1.  
knew how to turn every thing to their  
own Advantage, thought fit to *initiate*  
or instruct certain Persons in the Mean-  
ing of their Rites. They gave out that  
such as died *uninitiated*\* wallow'd in  
infernal Mire, whilst the Purifi'd and  
*Initiated* dwelt with the Gods; which  
as well increas'd their Veneration for,  
as a Desire of enjoying, so great a Hap-  
piness. The *Initiated*, after some Years  
Preparation to make them value what  
cost so much Time and Patience, were  
devoutly sworn † never to discover  
what they saw or heard under Pain of  
|| Death, tho they might discourse of  
them amongst themselves, lest too

F 3

great

\* "Ὅς ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτελής εἰς ἅδου ἀφίκηται, ἐν  
βορβόρῳ κείσεται. Ὁ δὲ κακασαρμίνος τε καὶ τετε-  
λεσμένος, ἐκείσθ' ἀφικόμενος, μετὰ θεῶν ὀικησεῖ.  
Plat. in Phædon. pag. 69. Edit. Paris. 1578. - Τελετῆς  
οἱ μετεχόντες, πρὶν τὴν τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς, καὶ τὴν σύμ-  
παντος αἰῶνος, ἠδύνας τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχουσιν. Isocrat.  
in Panegyri. Initiaq; ut appellantur, ita re vera prin-  
cipia vitæ cognovimus: neq; solum cum læticia vi-  
vendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore  
moriendi. Cicer. l. 2. de Leg. c. 14.

† Quis Ceteris ritus audeat vulgare Profanis?

Magna que Threicio sacra reperta Samo? Ovid.  
l. 2. de Arte Amand. v. 601. Ὁ καλὸς ἐξορματίζομαι τὰ  
μυστήρια, καὶ τὰ ἀφαντα φήνας. Aristid.

|| Νόμος, ὃ ἐξαιρῶντα τὰ μυστήρια τὸ δίδναναι. Soli-  
pater in Divis. Quæst.



Sect. 3. great a Constraint should tempt them to blab the Secret. And so religiously they kept this Oath, that some of them, after their Conversion to *Christianity*, could hardly be brought to declare what pass'd at their *Initiation* in *Gentilism*. The *Athenians* thought no Torments exquisite enough to punish \* *Diagoras* the Philosopher, for divulging their *Mysteries*; and not content to brand him with *Atheism* for laughing at their Weakness, they promis'd a Talent as a Reward to any that should kill him. 'Twas Death to say *Adonis* was a Man; some suffer'd upon that account: And many were torn in pieces at the † *Mysteries* of *Ceres*, and the ‖ *Orgies* of *Bacchus*, for their unadvis'd Curiosity.

4. Cre-

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\* Ἦν ἀποκτεῖνῃ τις ὑμῶν Διαδόξαν τὸν μῆλιν, λαμβάνειν τάλαντον. Aristophanes in *Avisus*; etiam *Surdas* in voce.

† Acarnanes duo Juvenes per Initiatorum dies non Initiati Templum Cereris, imprudentes Religionis, cum cetera turba ingressi sunt. Facile eos Sermo prodidit, absurdè quædam percunctantes: Beductiq; ad Antistites Templi, quum palam esset per errorem ingressos, tanquam ob infandum scelus interfecti sunt. *Livius*, lib. 31. cap. 14.

‖ Witness the Story of *Pentheus*, which afforded the Subject of a Tragedy to *Euripides*.

4. Credible Authors report, that the Ch. 1.  
*Priests* confess'd to the *Initiated* how  
these Mystick Representations were  
instituted at first in Commemoration  
of some remarkable Accidents, or to  
the Honour of some great Persons that  
oblig'd the World by their Vertues  
and useful Inventions to pay them such  
Acknowledgments. But let this be as  
it will, *Myein* in their Systems signify'd  
to initiate: *Myesis*, Initiation: *Mystes*,  
a Name afterwards given the *Priests*,  
denoted the Person to be initiated, who  
was call'd an \* *Epopt* when admitted;  
and *Mystery* the Doctrine in which he  
was initiated. As there were several  
† Degrees, so there were different sorts  
of *Mysteries*. The most famous were  
the *Samothracian*, the *Eleusinian*, the  
*Egyptian*, and those of *Bacchus*, com-  
monly known by the name of || *Orgies*;

Μυῖν.

Μυήσις.

Μύστης.

Μυστήριον.

F 4

tho

\* Οἱ τὰ μυστήρια παραλαμβάνοντες, λέγονται ἐν  
αρχῇ μύσαι μετα ἐνιαυτὸν ὃ ἐπόπται καὶ ἔπρεσι.  
Scholiast. in Aristophanis Ranas.

† Ἐστὶ τὰ μικρὰ [μυστήρια] ὥσπερ περὶ χεῖρας καὶ  
περὶ γνευσις τῶν μεγάλων. Schol. in Plut. Aristophan.  
Act. 4. Sc. 2.

|| Pars obscura cavis celebrabant Orgia cistis,

Orgia quæ frustra cupiunt audire Profani.

Cat. Epigram. 64. v. 250.

Sect. 3. tho the word is sometimes put for any  
 of the former.

5. From what has been said it is clear, that they understood by *Mystery* in those Days *a thing intelligible of it self, but so veil'd by others, that it could not be known without special Revelation.* I need not add, that in all the *Greek* and *Roman* Authors it is constantly put as a very vulgar Expression, for any thing sacred or profane that is design'dly kept secret, or accidentally obscure. And this is the common Acceptation of it still: for when we cannot see clearly into a Business, we say it is a *Mystery* to us; and that an obscure or perplex'd Discourse is very *mysterious*. *Mysteries* of State, Sciences and Trades run all in the same Notion.

6. But many not denying what is so plain, yet being strongly inclin'd out of Ignorance or Passion to maintain what was first introduc'd by the Craft or Superstition of their Fore-fathers, will have some *Christian Doctrines* to be still *mysterious* in the second Sense of the Word, that is, *inconceivable in themselves, however clearly reveal'd.* They think



think a long Prescription will argue it Ch. 1.  
 Folly in any to appear against them, and indeed Custom has made it dangerous. But, slighting so mean Considerations, if I can demonstrate that in the New Testament *Mystery* is always us'd in the first Sense of the Word, or that of the *Gentiles*, viz. for things naturally very intelligible, but so cover'd by figurative Words or Rites, that Reason could not discover them without special Revelation; and that the Vail is actually taken away; then it will manifestly follow that the Doctrines so reveal'd cannot now be properly call'd *Mysteries*.

7. This is what I hope to perform in the Sequel of this Section, to the entire Satisfaction of those sincere Christians more concern'd for the Truth than the old or gainful Opinion. Yet I must first remove out of my way certain common places of cavilling, with which, not only the raw Beginners of the most implicate Constitution raise a great Dust upon all occasions, tho not able to speak of anything pertinently when jostled out of the beaten Road; but truly their venerable Teachers are not asham'd sometimes to play at this small Game,


Sect. 3. Game, which, they know, rather amuses the Prejudic'd of their own side, than edifies the Adversaries of any sort. I wish there were more even of a well-meaning Zeal without Knowledge, than of Art or Cunning in this Conduct.

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## C H A P. II.

*That nothing ought to be call'd a MYSTERY, because we have not an adequate Idea of all its Properties, nor any at all of its Essence.*

8. **I** Shall discuss this Point with all the Perspicuity I am able. And, first, I affirm, *That nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, or a distinct View of all its Properties at once; for then every thing would be a Mystery.* The Knowledge of finite Creatures is gradually progressive, as Objects are presented to the Understanding. *Adam did*

did not know so much in the twentieth Ch. 2.  
as in the hundredth Year of his Age ;   
and *Jesus Christ* is expressly recorded to  
have *increas'd in Wisdom as well as in* Luk. 2.52.  
*Stature.* We are said to know a thou-  
sand things, nor can we doubt of it ;  
yet we never have a full Conception  
of whatever belongs to them. I un-  
derstand nothing better than this *Table*  
upon which I am now writing : I  
conceive it divisible into Parts beyond  
all Imagination ; but shall I say it is  
*above my Reason* because I cannot count  
these Parts, nor distinctly perceive their  
Quantity and Figures ? I am convinc'd  
that *Plants* have a regular Contexture,  
and a multitude of Vessels, many of  
them equivalent or analogous to those  
of *Animals*, whereby they receive a  
Juice from the Earth, and prepare it,  
changing some into their own Sub-  
stance, and evacuating the excrementi-  
tious Parts. But I do not clearly com-  
prehend how all these Operations are  
perform'd, tho I know very well  
what is meant by a *Tree*.

9. The Reason is, because *knowing  
nothing of Bodies but their Properties,  
God has wisely provided we should under-  
stand*



*Sect. 3. stand no more of these than are useful and necessary for us; which is all our present Condition needs. Thus our Eyes are not given us to see all Quantities, nor perhaps any thing as it is in it self, but as it bears some Relation to us. What is too minute, as it escapes our Sight, so it can neither harm nor benefit us: and we have a better View of Bodies the nearer we approach them, because then they become more convenient or inconvenient; but as we remove farther off, we lose their Sight with their Influence. I'm perswaded there's no Motion which does not excite some Sound in Ears dispos'd to be affected with proportionable Degrees of Force from the Air; and, it may be, the small Animals concern'd can hear the Steps of the Spider, as we do those of Men and Cattel. From these and Millions of other Instances, it is manifest, that we have little Certainty of any thing but as it is noxious or beneficial to us.*

10. Rightly speaking then, we are accounted to *comprehend* any thing when its chief Properties and their several Uses are known to us: for

\* to comprehend in all correct Authors Ch. 2.  
 is nothing else but to know; and as of  
*what is not knowable we can have no Idea,*  
*so it is nothing to us.* It is improper  
 therefore to say a thing is above our  
 Reason, because we know no more of  
 it than concerns us, and ridiculous to  
 supersede our Disquisitions about it up-  
 on that score. What should we think  
 of a Man that would stily maintain  
*Water* to be above his Reason, and that  
 he would never enquire into its Na-  
 ture, nor employ it in his House or  
 Grounds, because he knows not how  
 many Particles go to a Drop; whe-  
 ther the Air passes through it, is in-  
 corporated with it, or neither? This  
 is for all the World as if I would not  
 go because I cannot fly. Now seeing  
*the Denominations of things are borrow'd*  
*from their known Properties,* and that  
*no Properties are knowable but what con-*  
*cern us, or serve to discover such as do,*  
 we cannot be accountable for compre-  
 hending no other, nor justly requir'd  
 more

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\* Εἰς δὲ τὸ ἄλλο πὶ καταλείπον ἡγεῖται σημαίνει  
 ὡς τὸ γινώσκον, ἔτ' ἄλλο πὶ καταλαμβάνειν τὸ  
 βεβαίως γινώσκον. Γαλ. 1. πρὸς αὐτοὺς. διδασκαλ.

Sect. 3. more by reasonable Men, much less  
 by the all-wise DEITY.


11. The most compendious Method therefore to acquire sure and useful Knowledge, is *not to trouble our selves nor others with what is useless, were it known; or what is impossible to be known at all.* Since I easily perceive the good or bad Effects of Rain upon the Earth, what should I be the better did I comprehend its Generation in the Clouds? for after all I could make no Rain at my Pleasure, nor prevent its falling at any time. A probable Hypothesis will not give Satisfaction in such Cases: The Hands, for Example, of two Clock-Dials may have the same external Motion, tho the Disposition of the latent Springs which produce it should be very different. And to affirm this or that to be the way, will not do, unless you can demonstrate that no other possible Way remains. Nay, should you hit upon the real Manner, you can never be sure of it, because the Evidence of Matters of Fact solely depends upon Testimony: And it follows not that *such a thing is so, because it may be so.*

12. The



12. The Application of this Dis- Ch. 2.  
course to my Subject admits of no Dif-  
ficulty ; and it is, first, That *no Chri-*  
*stian Doctrine, no more than any ordinary*  
*Piece of Nature, can be reputed a My-*  
*stery, because we have not an adequate*  
*or compleat Idea of whatever belongs to*  
*it. Secondly, That what is reveal'd*  
*in Religion, as it is most useful and ne-*  
*cessary, so it must and may be as easily*  
*comprehended, and found as consistent*  
*with our common Notions, as what we*  
*know of Wood or Stone, of Air, of Wa-*  
*ter, or the like. And, Thirdly, That*  
*when we do as familiarly explain such*  
*Doctrines, as what is known of natural*  
*things, (which I pretend we can) we*  
*may then be as properly said to comprehend*  
*the one as the other.*

13. They trifle then exceedingly, and  
discover a mighty Scarcity of better Ar-  
guments, who defend their *Mysteries*  
by this pitiful Shift of drawing Inferen-  
ces from what is unknown to what is  
known, or of insisting upon adequate I-  
deas; except they will agree, as some do,  
to call every Spire of Grass, Sitting and  
Standing, Fish or Flesh, profound *My-*  
*steries.* And if out of a pertinacious or  
worse

Sect. 3. worse Humour they will be still fool-  
 ing, and call these things *Mysteries*,  
 I'm willing to admit as many as they  
 please in *Religion*, if they will allow  
 me likewise to make mine as intelligi-  
 ble to others as these are to me.

14. But to finish this Point, I con-  
 clude, that neither GOD himself, nor  
 any of his Attributes, are *Mysteries* to  
 us for want of an adequate Idea : No,  
 not *Eternity*. The *Mysterious Wits* do  
 never more expose themselves than  
 when they treat of *Eternity* in parti-  
 cular. Then they think themselves  
 in their impregnable Fortrefs, and  
 strangely insult over those dull Crea-  
 tures that cannot find a thing where it  
 is not. For if any Bounds (as Begin-  
 ning or End) could be assign'd to *E-*  
*ternity*, it ceases immediately to be  
 what it should ; and you frame only  
 a finite, or rather a *negative Idea*, which  
 is the Nature of all Limitation. Nor  
 can it be said, that therefore *Eternity*  
 is above Reason in this Respect, or that  
 it is any Defect in us not to exhaust its  
 Idea ; for what greater Perfection can  
 be ascrib'd to Reason than to know  
 precisely the Nature of things ? And  
 does

does not all its Errors lie in attribut- Ch. 2.  
ing those Properties to a thing which it  
has not, or taking any away that it  
contains? *Eternity* therefore is no more  
above Reason *because it cannot be ima-*  
*gin'd*, than a Circle, *because it may*;  
for in both Cases Reason performs its  
Part according to the different Natures  
of the Objects, whereof the one is  
essentially imaginable, the other not.

15. Now it appears that the preten-  
ded *Mysteriousness* of *Eternity* do's not  
consist in the want of an adequate No-  
tion, which is all that we consider in  
it at present. The Difficulties rais'd  
from its Duration, as, that *Succession*  
*seems to make it finite*, and that *all*  
*things must exist together if it be instan-*  
*taneous*, I despair not of solving very  
easily; and rendring *Infinity* also  
(which is inseparable from it, or rather  
a different Consideration of the same  
thing) as little *mysterious* as that *three*  
*and two make five*. But this falls natu-  
rally into my *second Discourse*, where I  
give a particular Explication of the  
*Christian Tenets*, according to the  
general Principles I am establishing in  
this.



Sect. 3.



16. As we know not all the Properties of things, so we can never conceive the *Essence* of any Substance in the World. To avoid Ambiguity, I distinguish, after an excellent modern Philosopher, the *Nominal* from the *Real Essence* of a thing. The *nominal Essence* is a Collection of those Properties or Modes which we principally observe in any thing, and to which we give one common Denomination or Name. Thus the *nominal Essence* of the Sun is a bright, hot, and round Body, at a certain Distance from us, and that has a constant regular Motion. Whoever hears the word *Sun* pronounc'd, this is the Idea he has of it. He may conceive more of its Properties, or not all these; but it is still a Collection of Modes or Properties that makes his Idea. So the *Nominal Essence* of *Honey* consists in its Colour, Taste, and other known Attributes.

17. But the *real Essence* is that *intrinsic Constitution* of a thing which is the Ground or Support of all its Properties, and from which they naturally flow or result. Now tho' we are perswaded that the Modes of things must have

have such a Subject to exist in, (for Ch. 2. they cannot subsist alone) yet we are absolutely ignorant of what it is. We conceive nothing more distinctly than the mention'd Properties of the Sun, and those whereby Plants, Fruits, Metals, &c. are known to us; but we have no manner of Notion of the several Foundations of these Properties, tho we are very sure in the mean time, that some such thing must necessarily be. The observable Qualities therefore of things is all that we understand by their Names, for which Reason they are call'd their *Nominal Essence*.

18. It follows now very plainly, that *nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we are ignorant of its real Essence, since it is not more knowable in one thing than in another, and is never conceiv'd or included in the Ideas we have of things, or the Names we give 'em.* I had not much insisted upon this Point, were it not for the so often repeated Sophistry of some that rather merit the Encomiums of great READER'S than great REASONERS. When they would have the most palpable

Sect. 3. Absurdities and Contradictions go down with others, or make them place Religion in Words that signify nothing, or what they are not able to explain, then they wisely tell them, that they are ignorant of many things, especially the *Essence* of their own Souls; and that therefore they must not always deny what they cannot conceive. But this is not all; for when they would (instead of confuting them) make those pass for ridiculous or arrogant Pretenders, who maintain that *only intelligible and possible things are the Subject of Belief*, they industriously represent them as presuming to define the *Essence* of God with that of created Spirits. And after they have sufficiently aggravated this Presumption of their own coining, they conclude, that if the Contexture of the smallest Pebble is not to be accounted for, then they should not insist upon such rigorous Terms of Believing, but sometimes be content to submit their Reason to their Teachers, and the Determinations of the Church.

19. Who perceives not the Weakness and Slight of this Reasoning?


We



We certainly know as much of the *SOUL* as we do of any thing else, *Ch. 2.* if not more. We form the clearest Conceptions of Thinking, Knowing, Imagining, Willing, Hoping, Loving, and the like Operations of the Mind. But we are Strangers to the *Subject* wherein these Operations exist. So are we to that upon which the Roundness, Softness, Colour and Taste of the Grape depend. There is nothing more evident than the Modes or Properties of *BODY*, as to be extended, solid, divisible, smooth, rough, soft, hard, &c. But we know as little of the internal Constitution, which is the Support of these sensible Qualities, as we do of that wherein the Operations of the *SOUL* reside. And, as the great Man I just now mention'd observes, *we may as well deny the Existence of Body, because we have not an Idea of its real Essence, as call the Being of the Soul in question for the same Reason.* The Idea of the Soul then is every whit as clear and distinct as that of the *Body*; and had there been (as there is not) any Difference, the *Soul* must have carri'd the Advantage,

Se<sup>ct</sup>. 3. tage; because its Properties are more immediately known to us, and are the Light whereby we discover all things besides.

20. As for *GOD*, we comprehend nothing better than his Attributes. We know not, it's true, the Nature of that eternal *Subject* or *Essence* wherein Infinite Goodness, Love, Knowledge, Power and Wisdom co-exist; but we are not better acquainted with the *real Essence* of any of his Creatures. As by the Idea and Name of *G O D* we understand his known Attributes and Properties, so we understand those of all things else by theirs; and we conceive the one as clearly as we do the other. I remark'd in the Beginning of this Chapter, that we knew nothing of things, but such of their Properties as were *necessary* and *useful*. We may say the same of *God*; for every Act of our Religion is directed by the Consideration of some of his Attributes, without ever thinking of his *Essence*. Our Love to him is kindled by his Goodness, and our Thankfulness by his Mercy; our Obedience is regulated by his Justice; and our  
Hopes

Hopes are confirm'd by his Wisdom Ch. 2.  
and Power. 

21. I think I may now warrantably conclude, that nothing is a *Mystery*, because we know not its *Essence*, since it appears that it is neither knowable in it self, nor ever thought of by us: So that the *Divine Being* himself cannot with more reason be accounted *mysterious* in this Respect than the most contemptible of his *Creatures*. Nor am I very much concern'd that these *Essences* escape my Knowledge: for I am fix'd in the Opinion, that *what Infinite Goodness has not been pleas'd to reveal to us, we are either sufficiently capable to discover our selves, or need not understand it at all*. I hope now it is very manifest that *Mysteries in Religion* are but ill-argued from the pretended *Mysteries of Nature*; and that such as endeavour to support the former by the latter, have either a design to impose upon others, or that they have never themselves duly consider'd of this Matter.





## C H A P. III.

*The Signification of the Word MY-  
STERY in the New Testament,  
and the Writings of the most an-  
tient Christians.*

22. **H**AVING so dispatch'd these  
*adequate Ideas*, and, I know  
not what, *real Essences*, we come now  
to the main Point upon which the  
whole Controversy chiefly depends.  
For the Question being, *whether or no*  
*Christianity is mysterious*, it ought to  
be naturally decided by the *New Testa-  
ment*, wherein the *Christian Faith* is  
originally contain'd. I heartily desire  
to put the Case upon this Issue, I ap-  
peal to this Tribunal: For did I not  
infinitely prefer the Truth I learn from  
these sacred Records to all other Con-  
siderations, I should never assert that  
*there are no Mysteries in Christianity*.  
The *Scriptures* have engag'd me in this  
Error, if it be one; and I will sooner  
be reputed Heterodox with these only  
on

on my side, than to pass for Orthodox Ch. 3.  
with the whole World, and have them  
against me.

23. Now by searching the *Scriptures*  
I find some of the Evangelick Do-  
ctrines call'd *Mysteries*, in a more ge-  
neral, or in a more particular Sense.  
They are more generally so call'd with  
respect to all Mankind : for being cer-  
tain Matters of Fact only known to  
God, and lodg'd in his Decree, or such  
Events as were quite lost and forgot  
in the World, it was impossible for  
any Person, tho never so wise or learn-  
ed, to discover them ; for *the things*  
*of God knoweth none but the Spirit of* <sup>1 Cor. 2.</sup>  
*God*, as none can find out the secret <sup>11.</sup>  
Thoughts of Man till he tells them  
himself. Such Revelations then of  
God in the *New Testament* are call'd  
*Mysteries*, not from any present Incon-  
ceiveableness or Obscurity, but with  
respect to what they were before this  
*Revelation*, as that is call'd our Task  
which we long since perform'd.

24. If any should question this, let  
him hear the Apostle *Paul* declare  
for himself and his Fellow-Labourers  
in the Gospel ; *We speak*, says he, *the*  
*Wisdom*

Sect. 3. *Wisdom of God hid in a MYSTERY,*  
 ~~~~~ *which God ordain'd before the World for*  
 1 Cor. 2. *our Glory, which none of the Princes of*
 7, 8. *the World knew, &c. And, to shew*
 that this Divine Wisdom was a *My-*
 stery for want of revealing Informa-
 Ver. 9, 10. *tion, he presently subjoins, Eye hath*
not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have
entred into the Heart of Man the things
which God hath prepar'd for them that
love him; but God hath reveal'd them to
us by his Spirit. The most perspicaci-
 ous *Philosophers* were not able to fore-
 tel the Coming of *Christ*, to discover
 the *Resurrection* of the Body, nor any
 other Matter of Fact that is deliver'd
 in the Gospel: And if they happen'd
 now and then to say something like
 the Truth, they did but divine at best,
 and could never be certain of their
 Opinion. It is a most delightful
 thing to consider what Pains the en-
 quiring *Heathens* were often at to give
 a Reason for what depended not in the
 least upon any Principles in their *Phi-*
losophy, but was an historical Fact com-
 municable by God alone, or such as
 had undoubted Memoirs concerning it.
 Of this I think it not amiss to add the
 following Example.

25. The same Experience that Ch. 3. taught the *Gentiles* their mortal Condition, acquainted them also with the Frailty of their Natures, and the numberless Calamities constantly attending them. They could not persuade themselves that the Species of Man came in such deplorable Circumstances out of the Hands of an infinitely good and merciful Deity; and so were inclin'd to impute all to the Wickedness of adult Persons, till they perceiv'd that Death and Misfortune did not spare innocent Children more than Robbers and Pirates. At last they imagin'd a *pre-existent State*, wherein the Soul acting separately like Angels, might have contracted some extraordinary Guilt, and so for Punishment be thrust into the Body, which they sometimes compar'd to a Prison, but oftner to a * Grave. This was likewise the Origin of *Transmigration*, tho' in process of Time the Sins of this World became as much concern'd in that Opinion as those of the other. But nothing is more ingenious than the

Ac-

* As if *Σῆμα* had been a Corruption of *Σῆμα*.

Sect. 3. Account which *Cebes* the *Theban* gives us of the Matter in his most excellent *Portraiture of humane Life*. He feigns * *Imposture* sitting in a Throne at the Gate of Life, in the Shape of a most beautiful Lady, holding a Cup in her Hand : She obligingly presents it to all that are on their Journey to this World, and these as civilly accept it; but the Draught proves *Ignorance* and *Error*, whence proceed all the Disorders and Misery of their Lives.

26. This Point was a great *Mystery* to these honest Philosophers, who had only Fancy to guide them, and could not pretend to Instructions from the *Mind of God*; but the thing is now no *Mystery* to us that have the *Mind of Christ*. We know that *Adam* the first Man became also the first Sinner, and Mortal; and that so the whole Race propagated from him could be naturally no better than he was : By one *Rom. 5. 12.* *Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin.*

27. But

* 'Οεἶς, εἶπ, ὡς τὴν πόλιν θρόνον τινα κα-
μενον—ἐφ' ἧς καὶ ζηταὶ γυνὴ πηλασώμενη τοῦ ἥθει, καὶ πυ-
δαυὴ φαινομένη, &c. *Cebet. Tab. p. 11. Ed. Amst. 1689.*

27. But some Doctrines of the Go- Ch. 3.
spel are more particularly call'd *Myste-
ries*, because they were hid from God's
peculiar People under the *Mosaick Oe-
conomy*; not that they knew nothing
concerning them, for *the Law had a* Heb. 10. 1.
Shadow of good things to come; but they
were not clearly and fully reveal'd till
the *New Testament* Times, being vail'd
before by various Typical Representa-
tions, Ceremonies, and figurative Ex-
pressions. *Christ* tells his Disciples,
Many Prophets and Kings have desir'd Luke 10.
to see those things which you see, and 24.
have not seen them, and to hear those
things which you hear, and have not
heard them. Paul says, *we use great* 2 Cor. 3.
PLAINNESS of Speech, and 12, 13.
not as Moses who put a VAIL over
his Face: And then expressly adds,
that *this VAIL is taken away in* Ver. 14.
Christ, which could not be truly af-
firm'd, were the things reveal'd still
inconceiveable; for *I know no Difference*
between not hearing of a thing at all, and
not comprehending it when you do. In
another Place Paul has these remarka-
ble Words; *The Preaching of Jesus* Rom. 16.
Christ according to the REVELATION 25, 26.

of

Sect. 3. of the MYSTERY which was kept secret since the World began; but now is made MANIFEST, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, MADE KNOWN to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith.

28. These Passages alone sufficiently prove the Assertions contain'd in N^o 6 and 7 of this Section, *viz.* First, *that the Mysteries of the Gospel were certain things in their own Nature intelligible enough, but call'd Mysteries by reason of the Vail under which they were formerly hid.* Secondly, *that under the Gospel this Vail is wholly remov'd.* From which, Thirdly, follows the promis'd Conclusion, *that such Doctrines cannot now properly deserve the Name of Mysteries.*

29. It is observable, that the hottest Sticklers for the *Fathers* do cite their Authority only where they think it makes for them, and slight or suppress it when not favourable to their Cause. Left it should be maliciously insinuated, that I serve the *Holy Scriptures* after the same manner, I shall here transcribe all the Passages of the
New

New Testament where the word *Mystery* Ch. 3. occurs, that a Man running may read with Conviction what I defend. The whole may be commodiously reduc'd to these Heads. First, *Mystery* is read for the *Gospel* or the *Christian* Religion in general, as it was a future Dispensation totally hid from the *Gentiles*, and but very imperfectly known to the *Jews*: Secondly, Some particular Doctrines occasionally reveal'd by the *Apostles* are said to be *manifested Mysteries*, that is, unfolded Secrets. And, Thirdly, *Mystery* is put for any thing vail'd under Parables or Enigmatical Forms of Speech. Of all these in Order.

30. *Mystery* is read for the *Gospel* or Christianity in general in the following Passages: *Rom. 16. 25, 26. The Preaching of Jesus Christ according to the Revelation of the MYSTERY which was kept secret since the World began; but now is made manifest, and by the Writings of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith.* Now, in what Sense could this *Mystery* be said to

Sect. 3. to be reveal'd, this Secret to be made manifest, to be made known to all Nations by the preaching of the *Apostles*, if it remain'd still incomprehensible? A mighty Favour indeed! to bless the World with a parcel of unintelligible Notions or Expressions, when it was already overstock'd with the *Acroatick* Discourses of *Aristotle*, with the *Eso-terick* Doctrines of *Pythagoras*, and the *Mysterious* Jargon of the other Sects of Philosophers; for they all made high Pretences to some rare and wonderful Secrets not communicable to every one of the Learned, and never to any of the Vulgar. By this means the obsequious Disciples apologiz'd for all that was found contradictory, incoherent, dubious, or incomprehensible in the Works of their several Masters. To any that complain'd of Inconsistency or Obscurity, they presently answer'd, O, Sir, the *Philosopher* said it, and you ought therefore to believe it: He knew his own Meaning well enough, tho he car'd not, it may be, that all others should do it too: So the Occasions of your Scruples, Sir, are only seeming, and not real. But the *Chri-
stian*

Asian Religion has no need of such miserable Shifts and Artifices, there being nothing in it *above* or *contrary* to the strictest *Reason*: And such as are of another Mind may as well justify the idle Dreams of the *Philosophers*, the Impieties and Fables of the *Alcoran*, or any thing as well as *Christianity*. The second Passage is in 1 Cor. 2.7. the Words were but just now read, and need not here be repeated. The third Passage is in 1 Cor. 4. 1. *Let a Man so account of us as the Ministers of Christ, and the Stewards or Dispensers of the MYSTERIES of God*; that is, the Preachers of those Doctrines which God was pleased to reveal. The fourth Passage is in *Ephes. 6. 9. Praying—for me, that Utterance may be given unto me that I may open my Mouth boldly, to make known the MYSTERY of the Gospel*. Parallel to this is the fifth Passage in *Col. 4. 3, 4. Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a Door of Utterance to speak the MYSTERY of Christ—that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak*. The Clearness of these Words admits of no Comment. The sixth Passage is in *Col. 2. 2. That*
H their

Sect. 3. *their Hearts might be comforted being knit together in Love, and unto all the Riches of the full Assurance of Understanding, to the Knowledge of the MYSTERY of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.* Here is evidently meant the Revelation of the Gospel-State: for whatever right Conceptions the Jews might have of the *Father*, they had not that full Knowledge of *Christ* and his Doctrines, which are the inestimable Privileges we now enjoy. The seventh Passage is in 1 Tim. 3. 8, 9. *Likewise must the Deacons be grave, not double-tongu'd, not given to much Wine, nor greedy of filthy Lucre, holding the MYSTERY of the Faith in a pure Conscience; that is, living to what they believe.* The eighth and last Passage relating to this Head is in 1 Tim. 3. 16. *And without Controversy great is the MYSTERY of Godliness: God was manifest in the Flesh, justify'd in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preach'd unto the Gentiles, believ'd on in the World, receiv'd up into Glory.* I will not now insist upon the various Readings of these Words, nor critically determine which is spurious or genuine. All Parties
(how

(how much soever they differ about Ch. 3.2
 their Sense) agree that the Gradations
 of the Verse are Gospel-Revelations;
 so that the *Mystery of Godliness* cannot
 be restrain'd to any one, but is com-
 mon to them all: It refers not to the
 Nature of any of them in particular, but
 to the Revelation of 'em all in general.
 And it must be granted, without any
 Dispute, that the gracious Manifesta-
 tion of *Christ* and his *Gospel* is not on-
 ly to us wonderfully stupendous and
 surprizing, but that it was likewise a
 very great *Mystery* to all preceding
 the *New Testament Dispensation*. From
 these Passages it appears, that the *Gos-
 pel* and the following Expressions are
 synonymous, viz. The *Mystery of the
 Faith*, the *Mystery of God and Christ*, the
Mystery of Godliness, and the *Mystery
 of the Gospel*. No Doctrine then of
 the *Gospel* is still a *Mystery* (for the
*Apostles conceal'd nothing from us that Acts 20.
 was useful, and have acquainted us with 20, 27.
 the whole Counsel of God:*) but 'tis the
Gospel it self that was heretofore in-
 deed a *Mystery*, and cannot now after
 it is fully reveal'd, properly deserve
 that Appellation.

Sect. 3.



31. We design in the second place to shew, that *certain Matters occasionally reveal'd by the Apostles, were only Mysterious before that Revelation.* The Jews, who scarce allow'd other Nations to be Men, thought of nothing less than that the time should ever come wherein those Nations might be re-

Rom. 11. 15. *concil'd to God, and be made Coheirs and Partakers with them of the same Privileges.* This was nevertheless resolv'd upon in the Divine Decree, and to the Jews was a *Mystery*, but ceases so to continue after the Revelation of it to *Paul*, who, in his Epistles, has openly declar'd it to all the World. The first Passage we shall alledg to that purpose is in *Eph. 3. 1—6, 9.* *If you have heard of the Dispensation of the Grace of God which is given me to you-ward, how that by Revelation he made known unto me the MYSTERY (as I wrote before in few Words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my Knowledge in the MYSTERY of Christ). which in other Ages was not made known unto the Sons of Men, as 'tis now reveal'd unto us, his holy Apostles and Prophets, by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be Fellow-*
heirs,


heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers Ch. 3.
of his Promise in Christ by the Gospel—
and to make all Men see what is the Fellow-
ship of the MYSTERY, which from the
Beginning of the World hath been hid in
God. The second Passage is in Rom. 11.
25. For I would not, Brethren, that you
should be ignorant of this MYSTERY,
that Blindness in part is happen'd to Isra-
el until the Fulness of the Gentiles be
come in. The third Passage is in Col. 1.
25, 26, 27.—The Church, whereof I
am made a Minister according to the
Dispensation of God which is given to me
for you, to fulfil the Word of God, even
the MYSTERY which hath been hid
from Ages and Generations, but now is
made manifest to his Saints: to whom
God would make known what are the
Riches of the Glory of this MYSTERY
among the Gentiles. The fourth Pas-
sage is in Eph. 1. 9, 10. Having made
known unto us the MYSTERY of his
Will, according to his good Pleasure which
he hath purpos'd in himself, that in the
Dispensation of the Fulness of times, he
might gather together into one all things
in Christ. These Places require no
Explication, for the Sense of them all

Sect. 3. is, that *the Secret of the Vocation of the Gentiles is in the Gospel made known, manifested and declar'd; and therefore remains no longer a Mystery.* The next thing under the Designation of a *Mystery* in the above-mention'd Sense is one Circumstance of the *Resurrection*. The *Apostle* having no less clearly and solidly than largely reason'd upon this Subject, (1 Cor. 15.) obviates an Objection or Scruple that might be rais'd about the State of such as should be found alive on the Earth at the last day. Behold, says he, ver. 51, 52. *I shew you a MYSTERY, I impart a Secret to you; we shall not all sleep, or die, but we shall all be chang'd in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye; — the Dead shall rise, and we shall be chang'd.* It is not the Doctrine of the *Resurrection* then, you see, that is here call'd a *Mystery*, but only this particular Circumstance of it, viz. that the Living shall at the Sound of the last Trumpet put off their Flesh and Blood, or their Mortality, without Dying, and be in an Instant render'd incorruptible and immortal, as well as those that shall revive. In the fifth Chapter to the Ephe-

Ephesians, ver. 31, 32. we learn that Ch. 3.
the mutual Love and Conjunction of *Man* and *Wife* is a Type of that indissoluble Union which is between *Christ* and his *Church*. This was unquestionless a great *Mystery* before we were told it, but now there is nothing more intelligible than the Foundation of that Resemblance or Figure. The Kingdom of *Antichrist* in opposition to the Gospel or Kingdom of *Christ* is also call'd a *Mystery*, because it was a secret Design carry'd on insensibly and by degrees : but at length, all Obstacles being remov'd or surmounted, it appears bare-fac'd to the Light, and (as it was divinely fore-told) ceases to continue a *Mystery*. Let no Man deceive you by any means, says Paul to the Thessalonians, (2 Thess. 2. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.) for that Day shall not come except there be a falling away or Apostacy first ; and that Man of Sin be reveal'd, the Son of Perdition, &c. And now you know what withholdeth, that he might not be reveal'd in his time ; for the MYSTERY of Iniquity doth already work, only he who now hindreth, will hinder till he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked

Sect. 3. *one be revealed.* These are all the Passages relating to the second Head.

32. *Mystery* is, Thirdly, put for any thing vail'd under Parables or Enigmatical Expressions in these parallel Places following. The first is in *Mat. 13. 10, 11.* *The Disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in Parables? He answer'd and said unto them, Because it is given to you to know the MYSTERIES of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given.* The second Passage is in *Mark 4. 11.* *And Jesus said to his Disciples, Unto you is given to know the MYSTERY of the Kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in Parables.* The same Words are repeated in *Luk. 8. 10.* And it is most evident from all of 'em, that those things which *Christ* spoke in Parables were not in themselves incomprehensible, but *mysterious* to them only to whom they were not unfolded, that (as it is there said) *hearing they might not understand.* It is now the most ordinary Practice in the World for such as would not be understood by every one, to agree upon a way of speaking peculiar to themselves.

selves. Nor is there any thing more Ch. 3.
easy than the Explication which *Christ* 
gave of these Parables at the Request
of his Disciples.

33. There are but two Passages only left, and *Mystery* in them has no reference to any thing in particular, but it is put for all secret things in its utmost Latitude or Acceptation. The first Place is in 1 Cor. 13. 2. *And tho I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all MYSTERIES and all Knowledge; and tho I have all Faith so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing.* The second, parallel to this, is in 1 Cor. 14. 2. *He that speaketh in an unknown Tongue, speaketh not unto Men but unto God; for no Man understandeth him, however in the Spirit he speaketh MYSTERIES; that is, what is intelligible enough to him, are Secrets to such as understand not his Language.*

34. Having so particularly alledg'd all the Passages where there is mention made of *Mysteries* in the *New Testament*, if any should wonder why I have omitted those in the *Revelation*, to such I reply, that the *Revelation*
cannot

Sect. 3. cannot be properly look'd upon as a
 ~~~~~ Part of the *Gospel*; for there are no  
 new Doctrines deliver'd in it. Far  
 from being a Rule of Faith or Man-  
 ners, it is not as much as an Explana-  
 tion of any Point in our Religion.  
 The true Subject of that Book or *Vi-  
 sion* is a Prophetical History of the Ex-  
 ternal State of the Church in its vari-  
 ous and interchangeable Periods of  
 Prosperity or Adversity. But that I  
 may not fall under the least Suspicion  
 of dealing unfairly, I shall subjoin the  
 few Texts of the *Revelation* wherein  
 the word *Mystery* is contain'd. The  
 first is in Rev. 1. 20. *The MYSTERY*  
*of the seven Stars which thou sawest in*  
*my right Hand, and the seven Golden*  
*Candlesticks: Well, what is the Myste-*  
*ry or Secret of these Stars and Candle-*  
*sticks? The seven Stars are the Angels of*  
*the seven Churches; and the seven Can-*  
*dlesticks, which thou sawest, are the seven*  
*Churches, namely, of Asia.* Another  
 Passage is in chap. 17. 5, 7. *And upon*  
*her Forehead was a Name written, MY-*  
*STERY, BABYLON THE*  
*GREAT, &c. And the Angel said,—*  
*I will tell thee the MYSTERY of the*  
*Woman.*

*Woman*. This he performs too in the Ch. 3. following Verses, which you may consult. Nor is it undeserving our particular Notice, that *Mystery* is here made the distinguishing Mark of the false or *Antichristian Church*. *Mystery is a Name written on her Forehead*; that is, all her Religion consists in *Mystery*, she openly owns, she enjoins the Belief of *Mysteries*. And, no doubt on't, as far as any Church allows of *Mysteries*, so far it is *ANTICHRISTIAN*, and may with a great deal of Justice, tho' little Honour, claim Kindred with the *scarlet Whore*. The only remaining Text is in chap. 10. 5, 6, 7. And the Angel which I saw stand upon the Sea and upon the Earth, lifted up his Hand to Heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created Heaven and the things that therein are, and the Earth and the things that therein are, and the Sea and the things which are therein, that there should be Time no longer; but that in the Days of the Voice of the seventh Angel, when he shall begin to sound, the MYSTERY of God should be finish'd: that is, that all the things figuratively deliver'd in this Prophecy concerning the Gospel (which

Sect. 3. (which was shewn above to signify the same with the *Mystery of God*) should have their final Accomplishment, and so end with this Globe and all therein contain'd.

35. I appeal now to all equitable Persons whether it be not evident to any that can read, that *Mystery in the whole New Testament is never put for any thing inconceivable in it self, or not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Notions and Faculties, however clearly reveal'd: And whether, on the contrary, it do's not always signify some things naturally intelligible enough; but either so veil'd by figurative Words and Rites, or so lodg'd in God's sole Knowledge and Decree, that they could not be discover'd without special Revelation.* Whoever retains any real Veneration for the *Scripture*, and sincerely believes it to be the Word of God, must be ever concluded by its Authority, and render himself, in spite of all Prejudices, to its Evidence. He that says the *Gospel* is his only Rule of Faith, and yet believes any thing not warranted by it, he is an arrant Hypocrite, and do's but sily banter all the World.



36. Nor can a more favourable Opinion be harbour'd of those, who, instead of Submission to the Dictates of *Scripture* and *Reason*, straight have Recourse to such Persons as they specially follow or admire, and are ready to receive or refuse an Opinion, as these shall please to direct them. Pray, Doctor, says one of his Parishioners, what think you of such a Book? it seems to make things plain. Ah! dear Sir, answers the Doctor, it is a very bad Book; he's a dangerous Man that wrote it; he's for believing nothing but what agrees with his own purblind, proud and carnal *Reason*. P. Say you so, Doctor? then I'm resolv'd to read no more of it, for I heard you often preach against *Human Reason*; I'm sorry, truly, it should unhappily fall into my Hands, but I'll take care that none of our Family set their Eyes upon't. D. You'll do very well, Sir: besides, this Book is still worse than I told you, for it destroys a great many Points which we teach; and should this Doctrine take, (which God forbid) most of the good Books you have at home, and which cost you no less Pains

Sect. 3. to read than Money to purchase, would signify not a Straw, and serve only for Waste-Paper to put under Pies, or for other mean Uses. P. Bless me, good Doctor, I pray God forgive me reading such a vile Treatise; he's an abominable Man that could write it; but what? my Books worth nothing, say you? Dr. H's Sermons, and Mr. C's Discourses Waste-Paper? I'll never believe it, let who will say the contrary; Lord, why don't you excommunicate the Author and seize upon his Books? D. Ay, Sir, Time was, — but now it seems a Man may *believe according to his own Sense*, and not as the Church directs; there's a *Toleration* establish'd, you know. P. That *Toleration*, Doctor, will —. D. Whist, Sir, say no more of it; I am as much concern'd as you can be; but it is not safe nor expedient at this time of day to find Faults.

37. There are others far from this Simplicity, but as firmly resolv'd to stand fast by their old Systems. When they tell us of *Mysteries* we must believe them, and there's no Remedy for it. It is not the Force of Reasoning that

that makes these for *Mysteries*, but Ch. 3.  
some by-Interest; and they'll be sure  
to applaud and defend any Author  
that writes in favour of their Cause,  
whether he supports it with *Reason*  
or not. But I'm not half so angry  
with these Men as with a sort of Peo-  
ple that will not be at the Pains of ex-  
amining any thing, lest they should  
become more clear-sighted or better in-  
form'd, and so be tempted to take up a  
new Road. Such Persons must needs be  
very indifferent indeed, or they make  
Religion come into their Scutcheons.

38. The mention of Scutcheons na-  
turally puts me in mind of those who  
are little mov'd with any Reasons,  
when *the Judgment of the Primitive*  
*Church* comes in competition. The  
*Fathers* (as they love to speak) are  
to them the best Interpreters of the  
Words of *Scripture*; " And what  
" those honest Men, says a very in-  
" genious \* Person, could not make  
" good themselves by sufficient Rea-  
" sons, is now prov'd by their sole  
" Authority. If the Fathers foresaw  
" this

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\* M. de Fontenelle, dans son *Histoire des Oracles*.



Sect. 3. " this, adds the same Author, they  
 " were not to be blam'd for sparing  
 " themselves the Labour of reasoning  
 " more exactly than we find they  
 " commonly did. That Truth and  
 Falshood should be determin'd by a  
 Majority of Voices, or certain Periods  
 of Time, seems to me to be the most ri-  
 diculous of all Follies.

39. But if *Antiquity* can in good  
 earnest add any worth to an Opinion,  
 I think I need not fear to stand to its  
 Decision: " For if we consider the  
 " Duration of the World, (says ano-  
 " ther celebrated \* Writer) as we do  
 " that of Man's Life, consisting of  
 " Infancy, Youth, Manhood, and old  
 " Age; then certainly such as liv'd  
 " before us were the Children or the  
 " Youth, and we are the true Antients  
 " of the World. And if Experience  
 " (continues he) be the most confi-  
 " derable Advantage which grown  
 " Persons have over the younger sort,  
 " then, questionless, the Experience  
 " of such as come last into the World  
 " must

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\* Monsieur Perrault dans ses *Parallèles des Anciens  
 & des Modernes.*

“ must be incomparably greater than Ch. 3.  
“ of those that were born long before  
“ them : for the last Comers enjoy not  
“ only all the Stock of their Predeces-  
“ sors, but to it have likewise added  
“ their own Observations. These  
Thoughts are no less ingenious than  
they are just and solid. But if *Ant-*  
*iquity* be understood in the vulgar  
Sense, I have no Reason to despair  
however ; for my Assertion too will  
become antient to Posterity, and so be  
in a condition to support it self by  
this commodious Privilege of Prescrip-  
tion.

40. Yet seeing I am not likely to  
live till that time, it cannot be amiss  
to make it appear that these same *Fa-*  
*thers*, who have the good luck to be  
at once both the Young and the Old of  
the World, are on my side. 'Tis not  
out of any Deference to their Judg-  
ments, I confess, that I take these  
Pains. I have freely declar'd what  
Value I set upon their Authority in the  
Beginning of this Book : but my De-  
sign is to shew the Disingenuity of  
those, who pretending the highest Ve-  
neration for the Writings of the *Fa-*  
*thers,*

Sect. 3. *ther's*, never fail to decline their Sentence when it sutes not with their Humour or Interest.


41. *Clemens Alexandrinus* has every where the same Notion of *Mystery* that I have, that the *Gentiles* had, and which I have prov'd to be that of the Gospel. In the 5<sup>th</sup> Book of his *Stromates*, which merits the Perusal of all that are curious to understand the Nature of the *Jewish* and *Heathen Mysteries*; in that Book, I say, he puts the Matter out of all Doubt, and quotes several of those Texts of Scripture, which I have already alledg'd to this purpose. Nay he tells us, that the *Christian Discipline* was call'd \* *Illumination*, because it brought hidden things to light, the Master (*CHRIST*) alone removing the Cover of the Ark, that is, the *Mosaick Vail*. He adds in express Words, † that those things which

were

\* Διὰ τὸ το φωτισμὸς ἡ μαθητεία κέκληται, ἢ τὰ κεκρυμμένα φανερώσουσι, ἀποκαλύψαντες μόνον τὸ διδασχάλε τὸ πῶμα τὸ κιβωτὲ. Pag. 578. edit. Col. 1688.

† Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ μυστήρια τὰ ἀποκεκρυμμένα ἔχει ἡ Ἀποστόλων, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ παραδοθέντα ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου παρελήφασιν· ἀπὸ κεκρυμμένα δὲ ἐν τῇ παλαιᾷ διαθήκῃ, ἃ νῦν ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἀγίοις. Idem ibid. pag. 576.



were mysterious and obscure in the *Ch. 3.*  
Old Testament are made plain in the   
New.

42. Every one knows how the Primitive *Christians*, in a ridiculous imitation of the Jews, turn'd all the Scripture into Allegory; accommodating the Properties of those Animals mention'd in the *Old Testament* to Events that happened under the *New*. They took the same Liberty principally with Men, where they could discover the least Resemblance between their Names, Actions, or State of Life; and carry'd this Fancy at length to Numbers, Letters, Places, and what not. That which in the *Old Testament* therefore did, according to them, represent any thing in the *New*, they call'd the *Type* or *Mystery* of it. Thus *TYPE*, *SYMBOL*, *PARABLE*, *SHADOW*, *FIGURE*, *SIGN* and *MYSTERY*, signify all the same thing in *Justin Martyr*. This Father affirms in his Dialogue with *Tryphon* the Jew, that the Name of *Josbua* was a *Mystery* representing the Name *Jesus*; and that the holding up of *Mo-*

Excd. 17.  
11.

Sect. 3. *ses's* Hands during the Battel with the *Amalekites* in *Rephidim*, was a Type or Mystery of *Christ's Cross*, whereby he overcame Death, as the *Israelites* there did their Enemies: and then he adds the following Remark;  
 \* *This is to be consider'd*, says he, concerning those two holy Men and Prophets of God, that neither of them was able in his single Person to carry both MYSTERIES, I mean the Type of his Cross, and that of being call'd by his Name. In the same Dialogue he calls the Predictions of the Prophets † SYMBOLES, PARABLES and MYSTERIES, explain'd by the succeeding Prophets.

43. When *Fertullian* in his Apology justifies the Christians from those inhu-

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\* Ἦν δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρων τῶν ἁγίων ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων καὶ προφητῶν τῶν δεῦρ, νοῆσαι γεγενημένον ὅτι ἀμφοτέρω τὰ μυστήρια εἰς αὐτῶν βασιῶσαι ἔκ ἧν δυνατός λέγω δὲ τὸν τύπον τῆ σταυροῦ, καὶ τὸν τύπον τῆ οὐνοματίας ὁπληρώσεως. Pag. 338. edit. Col. 1686.

† Εἰ μὴ τί τὸ τοῦτο ἔκ ὁπισθοδε, ὧ φίλοι, ὅτι πολλὰς λόγους τῆς ἀπακαταλιμμένως καὶ ἐν ἀσάβητοις ἢ μυστήριος ἢ ἐν συμβόλοις ἔργων λελεγχμένους, οἱ μετ' ἐκείνων τὰς εἰπόντας ἢ πράξαντας γινόμενοι προφῆται ἐξηγήσαντο. Pag. 294.

inhumane Practices whereof their E- Ch. 3.  
 nemies most unjustly accus'd 'em, he  
 cries, \* ' We are beset, we are disco-  
 ' ver'd every day; — But if we  
 ' keep always hid, how are those  
 ' things known which we are said to  
 ' commit? Nay, who could make  
 ' them known? Such as are guilty!  
 ' Not so, surely: for all *Mysteries*  
 ' are of Course under an Oath of Se-  
 ' crecy. The *Samothracian*, the *Eleu-*  
 ' *sinian Mysteries* are conceal'd; how  
 ' much rather such as being discover'd  
 ' would now provoke the Justice of  
 ' Men, and might expect to meet  
 ' with that of God hereafter? They  
 are secret Practices, you see, and not  
 incomprehensible Doctrines which this  
 Father counted *Mysteries*.

44. *Origen* makes the Encampments  
 of the *Israelites* in their Journey to the

I 3

Pro-

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\* Quotidiè obsidemur, quotidiè prodimus.  
 — Si semper latemus, quando proditum est quod ad-  
 mittimus? Immo à quibus prodi poruit? Ab ipsis  
 reis! Non utique; cum vel ex forma omnibus My-  
 steriis silentii fides debeat, Samothracia & Eleu-  
 sinia reticentur; quanto magis talia quæ prodita in-  
 terim etiam Humanam animadversionem provoca-  
 bunt, dum Divina servatur? Pag. 8. edit. Paris.  
 1675.



Sect. 3. Promis'd Land to be \* *Symbols* or *Mysteries* describing the way to such as shall travel towards Heaven, or heavenly things. I need not add what he says of the Writings of the *Prophets*, of the Vision of *Ezekiel*, or the *Apocalypse* in particular: for he is universally confess'd to have brought this *Mystick* or *Allegorical Method* of interpreting Scripture to its Perfection, and to have furnish'd Matter to all that trod the same Path after him; an Honour, in my Opinion, not to be envy'd him. But he was so far from thinking any Doctrine of our Religion a *Mystery* in the present Sense of the Word, that he expressly affirms them † to agree all with **COMMON NOTIONS**, and to commend themselves to the Assent of every well-dispos'd Hearer.

## 45. The

\* Εἰ δὲ δύναται διὰ συμβόλων καὶ τὴν ἑσθὺν δεδηλωμένην καὶ ὁμιλοῦντων ὅτι τὰ θεῖα μαθεῖν ἀναγράφεται τοῖς προφητογραμμένοις Ἀειδμῶς Μωϋσέως, καὶ ζητήσατο πρὸς ἀνάμνησιν [αὐτὸν] μνησθῆναι ὅτι τὰ καὶ παρεμβολῶν τῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἀναγεγραμμένα. Lib. 6. contra Cels. pag. 291. edit. Cantab. 1677.

† Ὅρα δὲ εἰ μὴ τὰ καὶ πίστεως ἡμῶν ταῖς ΚΟΙΝΑΙΣ ΕΝΝΟΙΑΙΣ ἀρχὴν ἀναγορεύοντι, μεταπίθουσι τοῖς ἐκγεγνημένους ἀκούοντας καὶ λεγόμενον. Lib. 3. contra Cels. pag. 135.

45. The other *Fathers* of the three Ch. 3.  
first Centuries have exactly the same  
Notions of *Mystery*: And should they  
in this Matter happen to contradict  
in one Place what they establish'd in  
another, (as they ordinarily do in  
most things) it would only serve to  
*exclude them from being a true Rule to*  
*others that were none to themselves.*  
But what is no small Prejudice in our  
Favour, seeing we have to do with  
Men so apt to forget, they keep ve-  
ry constant to this Point: so that I  
may justly hope by this time the Cause  
of *Incomprehensible and Inconceivable*  
*Mysteries in Religion* should be readily  
given up by all that sincerely respect  
**FATHERS, SCRIPTURE, or**  
**REASON.**

## C H A P. IV.

Objections brought from particular Texts of *SCRIPTURE*, and from the Nature of *FAITH* answer'd.

46. **S**OME Men are so fond of *Mysteries*, and it seems they find their Account in it, that they are ready to hazard any thing sooner than part with them. In the mean time, whether they know it or not, they lay nothing less than their Religion at stake by this Conduct; for it is an ugly Sign when People profess that what they believe is above the Examination of Reason, and will suffer it by no means to come into question: *It argues in themselves a Distrust of their Cause;—and others conclude, that what dares not abide the Trial of Reason, must needs it self be unreasonable at Bottom.*

47. Notwithstanding these Consequences are so obvious, they harden them-



themselves against them, and are not Ch. 4.  
asham'd to bring even *Scripture* to countenance their Assertion. You shall hear nothing more frequently in their Mouths than these Words of the Apostle, *Beware lest any Man spoil you by PHILOSOPHY and vain Deceit, after the Tradition of Men, after the Rudiments of the World, and not after Christ.* Ridiculous! as if Reason and Truth were Vanity and Craft! By *Philosophy* is not here understood *sound Reason*, (as all Interpreters agree) but the Systems of *Plato*, of *Aristotle*, of *Epicurus*, of the *Academicks*, &c. many of whose Principles are directly repugnant to common Sense and good Morals. *Sophistry* was never more in vogue than in the Days of *Paul*; and several out of these Sects imbracing *Christianity*, found the way to mix with it their old Opinions, which they were loth to quit for good and all. The Apostle therefore had weighty grounds to warn his Converts not to confound the Inventions of Men with the Doctrine of God. It appears nevertheless that this good Advice was to little Purpose, for you'll find

Sect. 3. find the grossest Mistakes and Whim-  
 ~~~~~sies of the *Fathers* to have been occa-  
 sion'd by the several Systems of *Philos-*
sophy they read before their Conver-
 sion, and which they afterwards foo-
 lishly endeavour'd to reconcile with
Christianity, to the entire Ruine almost
 of the latter, as we shall shew in the
 following Chapter.

48. But as no particular *Hypothesis*
 whatsoever has a Right to set up for a
 Standard of Reason to all Mankind,
 much less may *vain Philosophy* or *So-*
phistry claim this Privilege: and so far
 am I from aiming at any such thing,
 that it is the very Practice I oppose in
 this Book. When some have ad-
 vanc'd the Metaphysical Nonsense of
 doting *Philosophers* into Articles of
 Faith, they raise a loud Clamour a-
 gainst *Reason*, before whose Evidence
 and Light their empty Shadows must
 disappear. For as in *Philosophy* so in
Religion every Sect has its peculiar
 Extravagancies, and the *INCOM-*
PREHENSIBLE MYSTERIES
 of the latter do perfectly answer the
OCCULT QUALITIES of the for-
 mer. They were both calculated at
 first

first for the same Ends, viz. to stop the Ch. 4.
 Mouths of such as demand a Reason where
 none can be given, and to keep as many
 in Ignorance as Interest shall think con-
 venient. But God forbid that I should
 impute the like nefarious Designs to all
 that contend for *Myſteries* now, Thou-
 sands whereof I know to be the best
 meaning Men in the Universe. This
sophistical or *corrupt Philosophy* is else-
 where in the *New Testament* ſtil'd 1 Cor. 3.
 the *Wisdom of this World*, to which 19.
 the *Greeks* were as much bigotted, as
 the *Jews* were infatuated with a Fancy
 that nothing could be true but what
 was miraculoſly prov'd ſo: *The Jews*
require a Sign, and the Greeks ſeek after 1 Cor. 1.
Wisdom. But this boasted *Wisdom* 22.
 was then *Fooliſhneſs with God*, and ſo
 it is now with conſidering Men.

49. A Paſſage out of the *Epistle* to
 the *Romans* is cited likewise to prove
Humane Reason not a capable Judg of
 what is divinely reveal'd. The Words
 are, *The Carnal Mind is Enmity againſt* Rom. 8. 7.
God; for it is not ſubject to the Law of
God, neither indeed can be. But if theſe
 Words be ſpoken of *Reason*, there can
 be nothing more falſe; becauſe *Reason*
 do's

Sect. 3. do's and ought to subject it self to the
 Divine Law : yet this Submission argues no Imperfection in *Reason*, as our Obedience to just Laws cannot be said to destroy our Liberty. *Reason* must first understand the Law of God, and then comply with it ; for a Man can no more deserve Punishment for not observing such Laws as are unintelligible, than for not performing what was never enjoin'd him. The *carnal Mind* then in this Place is not *Reason*, but the carnal Desires of lewd and wicked Men ; whose Practices, as they are contrary to the reveal'd Law of God, so they are to that of sound *Reason* too.

50. What has been discours'd of pretended Wisdom and sensual Minds, may be easily appli'd to another Passage where it is said, that *the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong Holds, casting down Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledg of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ.* It is plain from the Words as well as the Scope of the whole,

2 Cor. 10.
4. 5.

whole, that these are the Thoughts **Ch. 4.**
and Imaginations of foolish and pro-
fane Men, and should be captivated or
reform'd by *Reason* as well as *Scripture*;
as, in effect, they often are: for
such Persons not ordinarily allowing
of Argument from *Scripture*, are first
perswaded by *Reason*, and after that
they receive the *Scripture*. But can
Reason cast down or destroy it self?
No; but it reduces those vain and
impious Sophisms which borrow its
Name to cover or authorize the Dis-
orders they occasion.

51. It would be extremely tedious
to go one by one over all the Texts
which ignorant or perverse Men al-
ledg against that Use of Reason in
Religion which I particularly esta-
blish. Any single Passage to my pur-
pose should, one would think, give
sufficient Satisfaction to all *Christian*
Lovers of Truth: for the Word of
God must be every where uniform
and self-consistent. But I have quoted
several in the second Chapter of the
second Section, to speak nothing of
what I perform'd in the foregoing
Chapter of the present Section. Yet
because

Sect. 3. because this Reasoning might be re-
 ~~~~~torted, and to leave no plausible Pre-  
 tentences to Cavillers or Deceivers, I have  
 punctually answer'd the strongest Ob-  
 jections I have observ'd in the most  
 celebrated Pieces of *Divinity*; I say  
*which I have observ'd*, for I should read  
 the *Gospel* a Million of Times over be-  
 fore the Vulgar Notion of *Mystery*  
 could ever enter into my Head, or any  
 Passage in that Book could suggest to  
 me that the Sense of it was above  
 Reason or Enquiry. Nor do I find  
 my self yet inclin'd to envy those  
 who entertain other Thoughts of it,  
 when all the while they openly ac-  
 knowledg it to be a Divine Revelation.  
 But seeing the most material Difficul-  
 ty made to me by a Friend, is, that  
 my Opinion destroys the Nature of  
*FAITH*, I shall with all the Brevi-  
 ty I can deliver my Sentiments con-  
 cerning this Subject.

52. I will spend no time upon the  
 ordinary Divisions of *Faith* into Hi-  
 storical, Temporary, or Justifying,  
 Lively or Dead, Weak or Strong, be-  
 cause most of these are not so much  
*Faith* it self, as different Effects there-  
 of.



of. The word imports *Belief* or *Per-* Ch. 4.  
*swasion*, as when we give Credit to any thing which is told us by God or Man; whence *Faith* is properly divided into *Human* and *Divine*. Again, *Divine Faith* is either when God speaks to us immediately himself, or when we acquiesce in the Words or Writings of those to whom we believe he has spoken. All *Faith* now in the World is of this last sort, and by consequence entirely built upon *Ratiocination*. For we must first be convinc'd that those Writings are theirs whose Names they bear, we then examine the outward State and Actions of those Persons, and lastly understand what is contain'd in their Works; otherwise we cannot determine whether they be worthy of God or not, much less firmly believe them.

53. To be confident of any thing without conceiving it, is no real *Faith* or *Perswasion*, but a rash *Presumption*, and an obstinate *Prejudice*, rather becoming *Enthusiasts* or *Impostors* than the taught of God, who has no Interest to delude his Creatures, nor wants Ability to inform them rightly. I  
prov'd

Sect. 3. prov'd before, (*Sect 2. Chap. 2.*) that  
 ~~~~~ the Difference between *Human* and  
Divine Revelations did not consist in
 degrees of Perspicuity, but in Certi-
 tude. So many Circumstances fre-
 quently concur in History as render it
 equal to Intuition: Thus I can as soon
 deny my own Being as the Murder of
Cicero, or the Story of *William the Con-*
queror; yet this happens only some-
 times: But God speaks always Truth
 and Certainty.

54. Now since by *Revelation* Men
 are not endu'd with any new Faculties,
 it follows that God should lose his end
 in speaking to them, if what he said
 did not agree with their common No-
 tions. Could that Person justly value
 himself upon being wiser than his
 Neighbours, who having infallible As-
 surance that something call'd *Blictri*
 had a Being in Nature, in the mean
 time knew not what this *Blictri* was?
 And seeing the Case stands really thus,
 all *Faith* or Perswasion must necessari-
 ly consist of two Parts, *Knowledge* and
Assent. 'Tis the last indeed that con-
 stitutes the formal Act of *Faith*, but not
 without the Evidence of the first: And
 this

this is the true Account we have of it Ch. 4. all over the *New Testament*. There we read that *without Faith it is impossible to please God*; but he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. So the firm Perswasion of a pious Man that his Requests will be granted, is grounded upon his knowledge of the Being, Goodness, and Power of God. It was reckon'd no Crime not to believe in *Christ* before he was reveal'd; for how could they believe in him of whom they had not heard? But with what better Reason could any be condemn'd for not believing what he said, if they might not understand it? for, as far as I can see, these Cases are parallel. *Faith* is likewise said to come by hearing; but without Understanding 'tis plain this Hearing would signify nothing, Words and their Ideas being reciprocal in all Languages.

55. The Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* do's not define *FAITH* a Prejudice, Opinion, or Conjecture, but Conviction or Demonstration: *Faith*, says he, is the confident Expectation of things hop'd for, and the Demonstration

K

of

Se&t. 3. *of things not seen.* These last Words, *things not seen*, signify not (as some would have it) things incomprehensible or unintelligible, but past or future Matters of Fact, as the Creation of the World, and the Resurrection of the Dead, or the Belief of some things invisible to our corporeal Eyes, tho intelligible enough to the Eyes of our Understanding. This appears by all the Examples subjoin'd to that Definition. Besides, there can be properly no *Faith* of things seen or present, for then 'tis Self-evidence, and not Ra-

Rom. 8.
24, 25.

tiocination: Hope that is seen is not Hope, for what a Man sees why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with Patience wait for


Heb. 11.
13.

it. So the Patriarchs receiv'd not the Promises, but saw them afar off, and were perswaded of them.

56. Without conceiving *Faith* after this manner, how could *Christ* be term'd *the Light of the World, the Light of the Gentiles*? How could Believers be said to *have the Spirit of Wisdom*, and to have *the Eyes of their Hearts enlightn'd*? For the Light of the Heart or Understanding is the Knowledg of things;

Joh. 8. 12.
& 9. 5.
Act. 13. 47.

Eph. 1. 17.
Ver. 18.

things; and as this Knowledge is more Ch. 4.
or less, so the Mind is proportionably 
illuminated. *Be not unwise,* says the Eph. 5. 17.
Apostle, *but understanding what the Will*
of the Lord is. And in another place
he exhorts Men never to act in dubious
Matters till they are *fully persuaded in* Rom. 14. 5.
their own Minds

57. But to all this will be objected
that remarkable Instance of *Abraham's*
Faith, who was ready to sacrifice his
only Son, notwithstanding God had
promis'd that Kings should descend of
him, and his Seed be numerous as the
Stars of Heaven, or the Sand upon
the Sea shore. Did *Abraham* blindly
obey then, without reconciling the
apparent Contradiction between God's
present Command and his former Pro-
mises? Far from it: for 'tis expressly
recorded, that *he that had receiv'd the* Heb. 11. 17,
Promises offer'd up his only begotten, of 18, 19.
whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy
*Seed be blessed: * Reasoning that God was*
able to raise him again from the Dead,
from whence also he had receiv'd him in a
Figure. He rightly concluded that

K 2

God

* So *λογισμεν* should be translated.

Sect. 3. God was able to revive *Isaac* by a Miracle, as he was miraculously born, according to another Promise, after his Parents were past having Children, and so as good as dead: therefore it is elsewhere written of *Abraham*, that being not weak in Faith, he consider'd not his own Body now dead, when he was about an hundred Years old, neither yet the Deadness of *Sarah's Womb*; nor stagger'd at God's Promise through Unbelief; but being strong in Faith he gave Glory to God, and was fully perswaded that what he had promis'd he was able also to perform.

Ver. 12.

Rom. 4.

19, 20, 21.

58. Now what is there in all this, but very strict Reasoning from Experience, from the Possibility of the thing, and from the Power, Justice, and Immutability of him that promis'd it? Nor can any Man shew me in all the *New Testament* another Signification of *Faith* but a most firm Perswasion built upon substantial Reasons. In this Sense all *Christianity* is not seldom stil'd *the Faith*; as now we usually say that we are of this or that **PERSWASION**, meaning the Profession of some Religion. But surely
nothing

nothing can better *root* and *establisb* Ch. 4.
 our Perswasion than a thorow Exam-
 ination and Trial of what we believe;
 whereas the Weakness and Instability
 of our *Faith* proceed from want of
 sufficient Reasons for it, whereupon
 Incredulity always follows; then
 fails Obedience, which is the constant
 Sign and Fruit of genuine *Faith*; and
 hence spring all the Irregularities of
 Mens Lives. *He that saith I know* 1 John 2.
him, and keepeth not his Commandments, 4, 6.
is a Liar—For *he that saith he abideth*
in him, ought himself also to walk as he
walk'd. Nor can it possibly fall out
 otherwise, but that he who believes
 without understanding must *be tost*
and carri'd about with every Wind of Eph. 4. 14.
Doctrine, by the Slight and Cunning of
Men ready to deceive.

59. Tho the Authority of the New
 Testament be so clear in this Matter,
 yet I shall further confirm it by the fol-
 lowing Observations. First, *if Faith*
were not a Perswasion resulting from the
previous Knowledg and Comprehension of
the thing believ'd, there could be no De-
grees nor Differences in it; for these are
 evident Tokens that Men know more

Se^{ct}. 3. or less of a thing, as they have De-
 ~~~~~ fires or Opportunities to learn it. But  
 that there are such Degrees appears by  
 the *Scripture*, where those that have  
 only an imperfect and perfunctory  
 Knowledg of Religion are compar'd  
 1 Cor. 3. 2. to *Infants* who feed only upon Milk ;  
 but they who arrive at a more full  
 and accurate Certainty are liken'd to  
 Heb. 5. 12, *grown Men* that can digest stronger  
 13, 14. Food.

60. My next Observation is, That  
*the Subject of Faith must be intelligible*  
*to all, since the Belief thereof is com-*  
*manded under no less a Penalty than*  
 Mark 16. *Damnation* : He that believeth not,  
 16. shall be damn'd. But shall any be  
 damn'd for the Non-performance of  
 Impossibilities? Obligations to believe  
 do therefore suppose a Possibility to  
 understand. I shew'd before that  
*Contradiction* and *Nothing* were con-  
 vertible Terms ; and I may now say  
 as much of *Mystery* in the Theological  
 Sense : for, to speak freely, *Contra-*  
*dition* and *Mystery* are but two empha-  
 tick ways of saying Nothing. *Con-*  
*tradiction* expresses Nothing by a cou-  
 ple of Ideas that destroy one another,  
 and

and *Mystery* expresses Nothing by Ch. 4.  
Words that have no Ideas at all. ~~~~~

61. The third Observation shall be,  
That if *any part of Scripture were unintelligible, it could never be rightly translated*, except the Sound of the Words, and not their Sense, be look'd upon as the Revelation of God. Terms can by no means be understood, unless the things they denote be understood also. I may well understand Things without their Names, but never Names without knowing their Subjects. And, in good earnest, to what sort of Assurance can any Man pretend, that he has made a right Version of what he openly professes not to conceive? It cannot be imagin'd how much the Notion of *Mystery* contributes to the Obscurity of *Scripture* in most Translations. When an able Linguist meets with a difficult Passage, he presently takes it for a *Mystery*; and concludes it is to no purpose to be at more Pains about what is in it self inexplicable. But an incapable Translator lays his own blundering Nonsense, and all the *mysterious* Fruits of his Ignorance to God Almighty's Charge. These are



Sect. 3. the Wretches who plentifully furnish  
 the *Atheistical* and *Profane* with all the  
 Matter of their Objections against  
*Scripture*. But I hope in Time we  
 may see a Remedy to these Disorders.

62. The fourth Observation is, That  
 except *Faith* signifies an intelligible Per-  
 suasion, we cannot give others a Reason  
 1 Pet. 3. 15. of our Hope, as Peter directs us. To  
 say that what we believe is the Word  
 of God, will be to no end, except we  
 prove it to be so by Reason; and I  
 need not add, that if we may not ex-  
 amine and understand our *Faith*, eve-  
 ry Man will be oblig'd implicitly to  
 continue of that Religion wherein he  
 is first educated. Suppose a *Siamese*  
 \* *Talapoin* should tell a *Christian* Prea-  
 cher that † *Sommonocodom* forbid the  
 Goodness of his Religion to be tri'd  
 by the Light of Reason; how could  
 the *Christian* confute him, if he like-  
 wise should maintain that certain  
 Points of Christianity were above Rea-  
 son? The Question would not be then,  
 whe-

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\* Or Priest.

† The God of the *Siameses*.

whether *Mysteries* might be allow'd in Ch. 4. the true Religion, but who had more Right to institute them, *Christ* or *Sommonocodom*?

63. My last Observation shall be, That *either the Apostles could not write more intelligibly of the reputed Mysteries, or they would not.* If they would not, then 'tis no longer our Fault if we neither understand nor believe them, for *nothing* cannot be the Object of Belief: And if they could not write more clearly themselves (which our Adversaries will not suppose) they were so much the less to expect Credit from others.

64. But 'tis affirm'd, that GOD has a Right to require the Assent of his Creatures to what they cannot comprehend: and questionless, he may command whatever is just and reasonable, for to act Tyrannically do's only become the Devil. But I demand to what end should God require us to believe what we cannot understand? To exercise, some say, our Diligence. But this at first sight looks ridiculous, as if the plain Duties of the Gospel, and our necessary Occupations, were not sufficient

Sect. 3. to employ all our time. But how, exercise our Diligence? Is it possible for us to understand those *Mysteries* at last, or not? If it be, then all I contend for is gain'd; for I never pretended that the *Gospel* could be understood without due Pains and Application, no more than any other Book. But if it be impossible after all to understand them, this is such a piece of Folly and Impertinence as no sober Man would be guilty of, to puzzle Peoples Heads with what they could never conceive, to exhort to, and command the Study of them; and all this to keep 'em from Idleness, when they can scarce find leisure enough for what is on all hands granted to be intelligible.

65. Others say that *GOD has enjoin'd the belief of MYSTERIES to make us more humble.* But how? By letting us see the small Extent of our Knowledg. But this extraordinary Method is quite needless, for Experience acquaints us with that every day; and I have spent a whole Chapter in the second Section of this Book, to prove that we have not an adequate Idea of all the Properties, and no Idea  
of



of the real Essence of any Substance Ch. 4.  
in the World. It had been a much better Answer, that God would thus abridg our Speculations, to gain us the more time for the practice of what we understand. But many cover a Multitude of Sins by their Noise and Heat on the behalf of such foolish, and unprofitable Speculations.

66. From all these Observations, and what went before, it evidently follows that *Faith* is so far from being an implicate Assent to any thing above Reason, that this Notion directly contradicts the Ends of Religion, the Nature of Man, and the Goodness and Wisdom of God. But at this rate, some will be apt to say, *Faith* is no longer *Faith* but *Knowledg*. I answer, that if *Knowledg* be taken for a present and immediate View of things, I have no where affirm'd any thing like it, but the contrary in many Places. But if by *Knowledg* be meant understanding what is believ'd, then I stand by it that *Faith* is *Knowledg*: I have all along maintain'd it, and the very Words are promiscuously us'd for one another in the Gospel. We know, i. e. we

Sect. 3. we believe, *that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World. I know, and*  
 ~~~~~  
 Joh. 4. 42. *am perswaded by the Lord Jesus that*
 Rom. 14. *there is nothing unclean of it self. You*
 14. *know that your Labour is not in vain in*
 1 Cor. 15. *the Lord.*
 58.


67. Others will say that this Notion of *Faith* makes *Revelation* useless. But, pray, how so? for the Question is not, whether we could discover all the Objects of our *Faith* by Ratiocination: I have prov'd on the contrary, that no Matter of Fact can be known without *Revelation*. But I assert, that what is once reveal'd we must as well understand as any other Matter in the World, *Revelation* being only of use to inform us whilst the Evidence of its Subject perswades us. Then, reply they, *Reason* is of more Dignity than *Revelation*. I answer, Just as much as a *Greek Grammar* is superiour to the *New Testament*; for we make use of *Grammar* to understand the Language, and of *Reason* to comprehend the Sense of that Book. But in a word, I see no need of Comparisons in this Case, for *Reason* is not less from God than *Revelation*; 'tis the Candle,
 the

the Guide, the Judg he has lodg'd Ch. 4.
within every Man that cometh into this World. ~~~~~

68. Lastly, It may be objected, That the Poor and Illiterate cannot have such a *Faith* as I maintain. Truly if this can be made out, it may pass for a greater *Mystery* than any System of *Divinity* in *Christendom* can afford: for what can seem more strange and wonderful, than that the common People will sooner believe what is unintelligible, incomprehensible, and above their Reasons, than what is easy, plain, and suited to their Capacities? But the Vulgar are more oblig'd to *Christ*, who had a better Opinion of them than these Men; for he preach'd his *Gospel* to them in a special manner; and they, on the other hand, *heard him gladly*; Mark 12. because, no doubt, they understood 37. his Instructions better than the *mysterious* Lectures of their *Priests* and *Scribes*. The uncorrupted Doctrines of *Christianity* are not above their Reach or Comprehension, but the Gibberish of your *Divinity Schools* they understand not. It is to them *the Language of the Beast*, and is inconsistent

Sect. 3. sistent with their Condition in his
 ~~~~~ World, when their very Teachers  
 must serve above an Apprenticeship  
 to master it, before they begin the Study  
 of the *Bible*. How slowly must  
 the *Gospel* have mov'd at the Beginning,  
 if such as were call'd to preach  
 it had been oblig'd to qualify themselves  
 after this manner! and no wonder  
 that it has such little Effects now  
 upon Mens Lives, after it is so miserably  
 deform'd and almost ruin'd by  
 those unintelligible and extravagant  
 Terms, Notions, and Rites of *Pagan*  
 or *Jewish* Original.

69. Thus I have distinctly answer'd  
 the several Objections made to me,  
 and I shall add no more on this Subject  
 of *Faith*, when I have consider'd a  
 Passage in the first Epistle to *Peter*,  
 where it is written, that the *Angels* desire  
 to see into certain things; yet those  
 things are not inconceivable *Mysteries*,  
 but the Coming of *Christ* and the *Gospel-state*  
*of Salvation*, which were divinely  
 foretold to the *Jews*, and concerning  
 which they carefully reason'd then;  
 tho, now those things are fulfill'd,  
 we are not permitted that Liberty.

ty. Receiving the end of your Faith, Ch. 4. says Peter, the Salvation of your Souls;  of which Salvation the Prophets have 1 Pet. 1. 9-12. enquir'd and diligently search'd, who prophesi'd of the Grace that should come unto you; searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testify'd before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow: Unto whom it was reveal'd, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preach'd unto you by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, which things the Angels desire to look into. Now here's no great Mystery in all this, that the Angels, who being finite Creatures, can know nothing but by Experience, Ratiocination, or Revelation, should be as curious as the Jews, to penetrate into those future Events of such Importance, and so very obscurely revealed.

## C H A P. V.

Objections, drawn from the Consideration of *MIRACLES*, answer'd.

70. **W**Hen all other shifts prove ineffectual, the Partizans of *MYSTERY* fly to *MIRACLES* as their last Refuge: but this is too weak a Place to make any long Resistance, and we doubt not of beating 'em quickly thence with Ease and Safety. But seeing, for the most part, the State of this Controversy is never distinctly laid, I shall first endeavour to give a clear Notion of the Nature of *Miracles*, and then leave it to be consider'd whether I have much reason to apprehend any Danger from this Objection. A *MIRACLE* then is some action exceeding all humane Power, and which the Laws of *NATURE* cannot perform by their ordinary Operations.

71. Now



71. Now whatever is contrary to *Reason* can be no *Miracle*, for it has been sufficiently prov'd already, that *Contradiction* is only another word for *Impossible* or *Nothing*. The *miraculous* Action therefore must be something in it self intelligible and possible, tho the manner of doing it be extraordinary. So for a Man to walk safe in the midst of Fire is conceivable, and possible too, should any thing capable of repelling the Heat and Flames surround him : but when such a Security is not provided by Art or Chance, but is the immediate Effect of supernatural Power, then it makes a *Miracle*. An able *Physician* do's sometimes restore Sight to the Blind ; and a Hand or Foot must dry up, when the Circulation of the Blood and Humours is too much excluded from it : but if without the ordinary Time and Applications those Members be cur'd in an Instant, at the Command or Desire of any Person, such an Action is truly *miraculous*, as well as the sudden Restoration of a sick Body to Health, which Art or Nature must spend a great deal of Time and Pains upon.

Sect. 3. 72. No *Miracle* then is contrary to Reason, for the Action must be intelligible, and the Performance of it appear most easy to the Author of Nature, who may command all its Principles at his Pleasure. Therefore all those *Miracles* are fictitious, wherein there occur any Contradictions, as that *Christ* was born without opening any Passage out of the *Virgin's* Body; that a Head spoke some Days after it was sever'd from the Body, and the Tongue cut out; with Multitudes of this kind that may be met with among the *Papists*, the *Jews*, the *Bramins*, the *Mahometans*, and in all Places where the Credulity of the People makes 'em a Merchandize to their Priests.

73. Let us next consider, that God is not so prodigal of *Miracles*, as to work any at random. The Order of Nature is not alter'd, stopp'd, or forwarded, unless for some weighty Design becoming the Divine Wisdom and Majesty. And, indeed, we learn from Scripture and Reason, that no *Miracle* is ever wrought without some special and important End, which is either appointed by those for whom the *Miracle*

cle

cle is made, or intended and declar'd Ch. 5. by him that works it. If the *Apostles* had barely cur'd the blind, the deaf, the lame, the diseas'd, this would certainly procure 'em an extraordinary Esteem; and in some Places too Divine VVorship, as it happen'd to *Paul* and *Barnabas* at *Lystra*, when they had cur'd a born Cripple without any farther Circumstance; but this was only a Means to gain the Attention of these Idolaters to the Doctrine they were about to preach in their City. Nor is there any *Miracle* mentioned in the *New Testament*, but what serv'd to confirm the Authority of those that wrought it, to procure Attention to the Doctrines of the *Gospel*, or for the like wise and reasonable Purposes.

74. By this Rule the celebrated Feats of *Goblins* and *Fairies*, of *Witches*, of *Conjurers*, and all the *Heathen Prodigies*, must be accounted fictitious, idle, and superstitious Fables; for in all these there appears no End deserving a Change in *Nature*. Besides, they evidently contradict our Idea of God, and quite subvert his Providence. Diabolical Delusions would hereby re-



Sect. 3. receive equal Confirmation with Divine Revelation, *Miracles* being perform'd in favour of both. Nay, the VVonders of the *Devil* and his Agents would infinitely exceed in Number and Quality those of God, and his Servants: which Assertion must hold true, were no Stories believ'd but the best attested in every County of *England*, to speak nothing of more credulous Nations; for it is very observable, that the more ignorant and barbarous any People remain, you shall find 'em most abound with Tales of this nature, and stand in far greater Aw of *Satan* than *Jehovah*. In a word, the *Heathens*, after this rate, would be rivetted in their *Idolatry*, and the ugliest Hag or most beggarly Astrologer equalize the Prophets and Apostles. But why should good Reasons be spent in Confutation of mere Fictions? for I challenge any Person whatsoever to produce one Instance of these lying VVonders that contains all the true Characters of Historical Evidence; and withal I dare engage as soon to prove the Goodness of the *Alcoran* as of the *Gospel*, if the Belief of any *Miracles*, except Divine ones, be granted me. But they must draw some

Advan-

Advantage from the superstitious Fear Ch. 5.  
of the People, who so industriously che-  
rish it. ~~~~~

75. After what has been already observ'd, I need not add, that all *Miracles* secretly perform'd, or among that Party only to whose Profit and Advantage the Belief of them turns, must be rejected as counterfeit and false; for as such cannot bear the Test of moral Certitude, so they contradict the very Design of Miracles, which are always wrought in favour of the Unbelieving. But the *Papists* alone must be the VVitneses of their own *Miracles*, and never the *Hereticks* they would convert by them: nor is their Practice less ridiculous in confirming one Miracle by another, as that of *Transubstantiation* by several more.

76. From all this laid together, it follows, that nothing contrary to Reason, whether you consider the Action, or Design, is *miraculous*. But there's a good old Distinction that serves all turns: Tho *Miracles* are not contrary to Reason, say one, yet they are surely above it. In what Sense pray? Which is above Reason, the Thing, or the Manner of it? If it be answer'd, the

Sect. 3. last, I suppose the Objector thinks I mean by *Miracle* some Philosophical Experiment, or some *Phenomenon* that surprizes only by its Rarity. Could I tell how a *Miracle* was wrought, I believe I might do as much my self; but what may be said to have been this or that way perform'd, is no *Miracle* at all. It suffices therefore, that the Truth of the Action be demonstrated, and the Possibility of it, to any *Being* able to govern Nature by instantaneously extracting, mollifying, mixing, infusing, consolidating, &c. and this, it may be, by the Ministry of thousands at once; for Miracles are produc'd according to the Laws of Nature, tho' above its ordinary Operations; which are therefore supernaturally assisted.

77. But finally, it will be said, that in the *State of the Question*, at the beginning of my Book, I maintain'd the Manner as well as the Thing was explicable. But of what? of *Miracles*? No surely; but of those *Doctrines* in Confirmation whereof the *Miracles* are wrought. This I stand by still, and may add, I hope, that I have clearly prov'd



prov'd it too : But to say as much of Ch. 6. *Miracles* would be to make 'em no *Miracles*, which shews the Weakness, and Impertinence of this Objection.

## CHAP. VI.

*When, why, and by whom were MYSTERIES brought into Christianity.*

78. **T**HE End of the LAW being Righteousness, JESUS CHRIST came not to destroy, but to fulfil it: for he fully and clearly preach'd the purest Morals, he taught that reasonable Worship, and those just Conceptions of Heaven and Heavenly Things, which were more obscurely signifi'd or design'd by the Legal Observations. So having stripp'd the Truth of all those external Types and Ceremonies which made it difficult before, he render'd it easy and obvious to the meanest Capacities. His Disciples and Followers kept to this Simplicity for some considerable time, tho very early di-

Sect. 3. vers Abuses began to get footing amongst them. The converted *Jews*, who continu'd mighty fond of their *Levitical* Rites and Feasts, would willingly retain them, and be Christians too. Thus what at the beginning was but only tolerated in weaker Brethren, became afterwards a part of *Christianity* it self, under the Pretence of *Apostolick* Prescription or Tradition.

79. But this was nothing compar'd to the Injury done to Religion by the *Gentiles*; who, as they were profelyted in greater Numbers than the *Jews*, so the Abuses they introduc'd were of more dangerous and universal Influence. They were not a little scandaliz'd at the plain Dress of the *Gospel*, with the wonderful Facility of the Doctrines it contain'd, having been accustomed all their Lives to the pompous Worship and secret *Mysteries* of Deities without Number. The *Christians* on the other hand were careful to remove all Obstacles lying in the way of the *Gentiles*. They thought the most effectual way of gaining them over to their side was by compounding the Matter, which led them to unwarranta-

rantable Compliances, till at length Ch. 6. they likewise set up for *Mysteries*. Yet not having the least Precedent for any Ceremonies from the *Gospel*; excepting *Baptism* and the *Supper*, they strangely disguis'd and transform'd these by adding to them the Pagan Mystick Rites. They administr'd them with the strictest Secrecy; and, to be inferiour to their Adversaries in no Circumstance, they permitted none to assist at them, but such as were antecedently prepar'd or *initiated*. And to inspire their *Catechumens* with most ardent Desires of Participation, they gave out that what was so industriously hid were \* *tremendous* and *unutterable Mysteries*.

80. Thus left *Simplicity*, the noblest Ornament of the Truth, should expose it to the Contempt of Unbelievers, *Christianity* was put upon an equal Level with the *Mysteries* of *Ceres*, or the *Orgies* of *Bacchus*. Foolish and mistaken Care! as if the most impious Superstitions could be sanctifi'd by the Name of *Christ*. But *such is always the Fruit of prudential and condescending*

*Terms*



Sect. 3. *Terms of Conversion in RELIGION,*  
 whereby the Number and not the Sincerity of Professors is mainly intended.

81. When once the *Philosophers* thought it their Interest to turn *Christians*, Matters grew every Day worse and worse; for they not only retain'd the Air, the Genius, and sometimes the Garb of their several Sects, but most of their erroneous Opinions too. And while they pretended to imploy their *Philosophy* in Defence of *Christianity*, they so confounded them together, that what before was plain to every one, did now become intelligible only to the Learned, who made it still less evident by their litigious Disputes, and vain Subtilties. We must not forget that the *Philosophers* were for making no meaner a Figure among the *Christians* than they did formerly among the *Heathens*; but this was what they could not possibly effect, without rendering every thing abstruse by Terms or otherwise, and so making themselves sole Masters of the Interpretation.

82. These Abuses became almost incurable, when the supreme Magistrate

strate did openly countenance the *Cbri-* Ch. 6.  
*stian* Religion. Multitudes then pro-  
 fess'd themselves of the Emperor's  
 Perswasion, only to make their Court,  
 and mend their Fortunes by it, or to pre-  
 serve those Places and Preferments where-  
 of they were already possess'd. These  
 continu'd Pagans in their Hearts; and  
 it may be easily imagin'd that they  
 carri'd all their old Prejudices  
 along with them into a Religion  
 which they purely embrac'd out of  
 Politick Considerations: And so it  
 constantly happens, when the Consci-  
 ence is forc'd and not perswaded,  
 which was a while after the Case of  
 these Heathens.

83. The zealous Emperors erected  
 stately Churches, and converted the  
 Heathen Temples, Sanctuaries, Fanes  
 or Chappels, to the Use of *Christians*,  
 after a previous Expiation, and pla-  
 cing the Sign of the Cross in them to  
 assure their Possession to *Christ*. All  
 their Endowments, with the Benefices  
 of the *Priests*, *Flamens*, *Augurs*, and  
 the whole sacred Tribe, were appro-  
 priated to the *Christian Clergy*. Nay,  
 their

Sect. 3. their very Habits, \* as *white Linen Stoles, Mitres*, and the like, were retain'd to bring those, as was pretended; to an imperceptible Change, who could not be reconciled to the *Christian Simplicity and Poverty*. But indeed the Design at bottom was to introduce the Riches, Pomp, and Dignities of the *Clergy* which immediately succeeded.

84. Things being in this Condition, and the Rites of *Baptism* and the *Supper* being very sensibly augmented, it will not be amiss before I pass further to lay down a short Parallel of the antient Heathen and new-coin'd *Christian Mysteries*. And I shall endeavour so to do it, as to make it evident they

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\* ——— Non discolor ulli  
Ante aras cultus; velantur corpora lino,  
Et Pelusiaco præfulget stamine vertex. *Sil. Ital.*

*lib. 3. v. 23.*  
Alba decet Cererem vestis; Cerealibus albam,  
Summe ——— *Ovid. Fast. l. 4. v. 619.*

Color autem Albus præcipue decorus Deo est, tum  
in cæteris, tum maxime in Textili. *Cic. l. 2. de Leg.*  
*cap. 18.*

Ἐδίδες δ' αὐτοῖσι πᾶσι λευκή, καὶ πᾶσι ὄντι τῷ θεῷ  
καλῶς ἔχουσι. *Lucian. de Dea Syria Sacerdotibus.*

Lingeri fugiunt Calvi, listrataq; Turba. *Martial:*  
*l. 12. Ep. 29.*



they were one in Nature, however Ch. 6.  
different in their Subjects.

85. *First*, Their Terms were exactly the same without any Alteration: They both made use of the words *initiating* and *perfecting*. They both call'd their MYSTERIES *Myseis*, *Teleioseis*, *Teleiotika*, *Epopteiai*, &c. They both look'd upon *Initiation* as a kind of *deifying*. And they both fil'd their Priests *Mystagogue*, *Mystes*, *Hieroteles*, &c.

Μυεῖσθαι,  
Τελειοῖσθαι.  
Μυήσεις,  
Τελειώσεις  
Τελειωπια,  
Εποπτεῖσθαι.  
Θεώσεις.  
Ἱερωτελε-  
σής.

86. *Secondly*, The Preparatives to their Initiations were the same. The *Gentiles* us'd several \* Washings and *Lustrations*; they † fasted, and || ab-  
stain'd

Καθαρισμός.

\* Sacerdos stipatum me religiosa cohorte deducit  
ad proximas balneas, & prius sueto lavacro traditum,  
præfatus Deum veniam, purissimè circummorans ab-  
luit. *Apul.*

Hæc sanctè ut possas, Tiberino in gurgite mergis  
Manè caput bis terque, & noctem Flumine purgas.

*Perf. Sat. 2. v. 15.*

Ter caput irrorat, ter tollit in æthera palmas.

*Ovid. Fast. l. 4. v. 315.*

† Τὸ ἀνδρῶν Ελευσινίων μυστηρίων Ἐνίσχυσαν  
ἄποιον καὶ κωκῶνα, &c. *Clem. Alex. pag. 13. Arnob. lib. 5.*

|| Vos quoque abesse procul jubeo, discedite ab aris,  
Queis tulit hesternâ gaudia nocte Venus. *Tibul. l. 2.*

*Æleg. 1. v. 11.*

Castâ placenti suporib; pura cum vesta venitis,  
Et manibus pueris semite fontæ sequantur. *Tibul.*

*Ibid. v. 13.*

Sect. 3. stain'd from Women before *Initiation*; tho the wiser sort did laugh at those who thought such Actions could \* expiate Sin, or appease Heaven. But the *Fathers*, the admir'd *Fathers*, imitated them in all these things; and this was the Origin of Abstinence from certain kinds of Meat, of your mock Anniversary Fasts, and the Clerical Celibacy.

87. *Thirdly*, The *Christians* kept their *Mysteries* as secret as the *Heathens* did theirs. † *Chrysostom* says, *We shut the Doors when we celebrate our Mysteries, and exclude the uninitiated.* || *Basil* of *Cesarea* assures us, *that the Esteem of Mysteries is preserv'd only by Silence.* And (\*) *Synesius* says, *that the Gentile Mysteries were perform'd by Night, because their Veneration proceeds from Mens Ignorance about them.* But why

\* Omne nefas; omnemque mali purgamina causam  
Credebant nostri tollere posse senes.

*Ovid. Fast. l. 2. v. 35.*

Ah nimium faciles qui tristia crimina cædis,  
Fluminea tolli posse putatis aqua! *Idem ib. v. 45.*

† Μυστήρια τὰς θύρας κλείσαντες ἐπιτελῶμεν, καὶ τοὺς ἀμύητους ἐξέρχου. *Homil. in Matth.*

|| Μυστήριον τὸ σίμνον σιωπῇ διασώσεται.

(\*) Ἀγνοσία σιμνότης ἐστὶν τελετῶν, καὶ νυξ διὰ τοῦτο πρεσβεῖται τὰ μυστήρια. *De providen. Sect. 2.*

why should that deserve Blame in o-Ch. 6. thers, good *Synesius*, which you allow in your own Party? or is it that the *Christians* have a better Right to *Mysteries* than the *Gentiles*?

88. *Fourthly*, The *Fathers* were extremely cautious not to speak intelligibly of their *Mysteries* before Unbelievers, or the *Catechumens*; whence you frequently meet in their Writings with these or the like Expressions, \* *The Initiated know, the Initiated understand what I say*. And as the *Heathens* did by Proclamation † drive away all the *Profane* from their *Mysteries*, so the *Deacons* of the *Primitive Church* cri'd aloud before the Celebration of *Baptism*, but chiefly of the *Supper*, || *Go out all you Catechumens, walk out all that are not initiated, or something to this Effect*, for they often vari'd the Form. *Cyril of Jerusalem* has a very singular Passage to our purpose,

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\* *Norunt initiati. August. in locis pluribus. \* Ἰσταντοὶ μεμνημένοι τὸ λεγόμενον. Chrysostom. in Genesi. in Homil. 27. & alibi passim.*

† *Οὕτως ἐπιδιδοὺ βιβλίου. Orpheus, Lucianus, &c.*

|| *Ὅσοι κατηχούμενοι παύονται, ἕξω πορεύονται ἵνα κερήμενοι.*



Sect. 3. pose, \* Now when catechising is re-  
 hears'd, if a Catechumen should ask you  
 what the Teachers said; tell it by no means  
 to any that is not initiated: for we en-  
 trust you with a Mystery, and the hope  
 of the Life to come. Keep this Mystery  
 then to him that rewardeth: and if any  
 should say unto you, What harm is it,  
 if I also learn? Answer him, that so sick  
 Persons desire Wine: But if it be given  
 to any unseasonably, it makes him frantick,  
 and so two Evils happen; both the  
 sick Man is destroy'd, and the Physician  
 is disparag'd. Thus if a Catechumen  
 hears

\* \* Οτε τοιουν κατήχους λέγεται, εάν σὺ κατηχόμε-  
 νος ἐξετάσῃ πὶ ἐρήκῃσιν οἱ διδάσκοντες, μηδὲν λέγα-  
 τῷ ἑξῆς. Μυστήριον γάρ σοι παραδίδωμεν, καὶ ἐλπίδα  
 μελλόντων αἰώνων. Τήρησον τὸ μυστήριον τῷ μετὰ ποδὸ-  
 τῷ μὴ ποτὲ σοι τις εἴπῃ, πὶ βλάπτῃ, εἰάν καὶ ῥῶ μάθῃ;  
 Καὶ οἱ νοσούντες τὸν οἶνον ζητῶσιν. Ἀλλὰ εἰάν ἀκαίρως  
 δοθῇ φρενήτην ἐργάζεται, καὶ δύο κακά γίνεται, καὶ ὁ  
 νοσῶν ἀπόλλνται, καὶ ὁ ἰατρὸς διαβάλλεται. Οὕτως  
 ὁ κατηχόμενος, εἰάν ἀκούσῃ παρά πῃ, καὶ ὁ κατηχόμενος  
 φρενιτῇ. ἢ διδῇ γάρ πὶ ἦκουσι, καὶ ἐλέγχει τὸ πρᾶγμα,  
 καὶ ἐκμυκτηρίζῃ τὸ λεγόμενον; καὶ ὁ πῶς ὡς προδοτικῇ  
 κατακρίνεται. Ἦδη δὲ σὺ μετὰ ῥῶ σῆκεις, βλέπε μοι  
 μὴ ἐπαλαίῃς, ἢ ὅτι ἐκ ἀξία λαλιάς τὰ λεγόμενα,  
 ἀλλὰ ὅτι ἡ ἀκού ἀνάξια τὸ δέξασθαι ἢ ποτὲ καὶ σὺ  
 κατηχόμενος, εὖ διαμαρτυρεῖται τὰ προκείμενα. Ὅταν  
 τῇ πύρρα λάβῃς τὸ ὕψωμα ὅθι διδασκόμενοι, τότε εὖ  
 γινώσκου ἀτάξιν οἱ κατηχόμενοι τῇ Ἀκούῃ. Cyril.  
 Hierosol. prefat. in Catechesi. Edit. Paris. 1832. 17.

hears those things from any of the Faith- Ch. 6.  
ful, he grows likewise frantick; for not  
understanding what he heard, he argues  
against the thing, and laughs at what is  
said: so the Believer that told it him is  
condemn'd as a Betrayer of Secrets. Now  
you being one of us, see that you blab out  
nothing: not that what we say are not  
worthy to be spoken, but that others are  
not worthy to hear them. When you  
were a Catechumen your self, we never  
told you what was propos'd. But when  
you have learnt by experience the Subli-  
mity of those things which are taught,  
you will then be convinc'd that the Cate-  
chumens are unworthy to hear them.

89. Fifthly, The Steps and Degrees  
in both their Initiations are the same.  
The Heathens had \* five Degrees ne-  
cessary to Perfection. First, common  
Purgation; Secondly, more private  
Purgation; Thirdly, a liberty of stand-  
ing amongst the Initiated; Fourthly,  
Initiation; and, Lastly, the Right of  
seeing every thing, or being Epopts.  
M Among

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\* 'Εν τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἡγῶντο μὲν αἱ πανδήμοι χάδαντες,  
ἅτα δὲ ταύταις αἱ ἀπόρρητότεραι, μετὰ ταύτας συ-  
σιεύουσιν, καὶ οὗτοι ταύταις μυσταῖς, ἐν τέλει δ' ἐποπταῖαι.  
Olympiodor.

Sect. 3. Among the *Christians* likewise there  
 were five Steps by which their Peni-  
 tents were re-admitted to Commu-  
 nion. First they were oblig'd to re-  
 main some Years separate from the  
 Congregation lamenting their Sins,  
 whence this Step was call'd *Proclausis*.  
 Secondly, they were remov'd nearer  
 the People, where during three Years  
 they might hear the Priests, tho not see  
 them: this Step was therefore call'd  
*Acroasis*. Thirdly, for three Years  
 more they might hear and see, but not  
 mix with the Congregation: this Pe-  
 riod was call'd *Hypoptosis*. Fourthly,  
 they might stand with the People, but  
 not receive the Sacraments: this was  
 their *Systasis*. And, Fifthly, they  
 were admitted to Communion, which  
 was call'd *Methexis*. The new Con-  
 verts likewise, under Preparation to  
 participate of the Mysteries, were  
 stil'd *Catechumens*; then *competent*;  
 and, lastly, *Epopts*, *perfect*, or *Belie-  
 vers*: which are the very Degrees in  
 Name and Quality, to which *Pythago-  
 ras* oblig'd his Disciples.

90. I could draw out this Parallel  
 much larger, but here's enough to shew

how



*how Christianity became mysterious, and* Ch. 6.  
how so divine an Institution did,  
through the Craft and Ambition of  
*Priests and Philosophers*, degenerate in-  
to meer *Paganism*.

91. *Mystery* prevail'd very little in  
the first Hundred or Century of Years  
after *Christ*; but in the second and  
third it began to establish it self by  
*Ceremonies*. To *Baptism* were then ad-  
ded the tasting of Milk and \* Honey,  
† Anointing, the Sign of the Cross,  
a white Garment, &c. There was  
quickly after a farther Accession of  
Questions and Answers, of antece-  
dent Fastings and Watchings, Kissing,  
and set times of Administration. Af-  
ter *Baptism* they did not || wash for a  
whole Week, exactly answerable to  
the Superstition of the Gentiles, who

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never

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\* Denique ut a Baptismate ingrediar, aquam adi-  
ruri ibidem, sed & aliquanto prius in ecclesia sub An-  
tistitis manu, contestamur nos renunciare Diabolo, &  
pompæ, & angelis ejus. Dehinc ter mergitamur, am-  
plius aliquid respondentes quam Dominus in Evangelio  
determinavit. Inde suscepti lactis & mellis concordiam  
præguſtamus; ex eaque die Lavacro quotidiano per to-  
tam Hebdomadem abstinemus. *Tertullian. pag. 102.*

† Egressi de Lavacro perungimur benedicta Uncti-  
one, &c. *Id. pag. 226.*

|| *Tertul. in loco citato.*

Sect. 3. never put off the \* Garment in which they were *initiated* till it fell all to tatters. Next were added Injection of Salt and Wine into the Mouths of the Baptiz'd, and a second Unction, with Imposition of Hands. But in later times there was no end of Lights, Exorcisms, Exsufflations, and many other Extravagancies of Jewish, or Heathen Original. From this Source sprang not only the Belief of *Omens*, *Presages*, *Apparitions*, † the Custom of *Burying* with three shovel-fuls of Earth, with other vulgar Observations among Christians; but also *Lights*, *Feasts* or *Holy-days*, *Consecrations*, *Images*, worshipping towards the || *East*, *Altars*,

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\* Ὁ δὲ μυσόμενος τὸ ἱμάτιον, ὃ ἐφόρει ἐν τῇ μυσίσει, ἔσπευτε ἀπιδύσει μέχεις ἂν πλείως ἀφανισθῇ διαρρέουσιν. Scholiast. in 1. ut. Aristophan.

† Priusquam in eos [scil. mortuos] injecta Gleba est, Locus ille, ubi crematum est corpus, nihil habet Religionis: Anglicè, *Before this Ceremony, 'tis not Hallow'd Ground.* Cic. l. 2. de Leg. cap. 22.

Archytas naufragus, pratercuntem exorans ne se inssepultum relinquat, sic preces absolvit apud Horatium :

Quanquam festinas, non est mora longa : licebit,  
Injecto TER pulvere, curras. *Lib. 1. Od. 28. v. 35.*

|| His Dea placanda est; hæc tu conversus ad ortum  
Dic quater ; & vivo perlue rore manus. *Ovid.*

*Fig. l. 4. v. 777.* Ὁ δὲ Νηὸς ὁρᾷ μεν ἐς ἥλιον ἀνέ-  
ωντα. Lucian. pag. 674. Edit. Amst. 1687.

*tars*, *Musick*, *Dedications* of Churches, Ch. 6. and in them distinct Places for the LAITY, (as they speak) and the CLERGY: for there is nothing like these in the Writings of the Apostles, but they are all plainly contain'd in the Books of the Gentiles, and was the Substance of their Worship.

92. All the Rites of the *Supper*, too tedious to particularize, were introduc'd by degrees after the same manner: So by endeavouring to make the plainest things in the World appear *mysterious*, their very Nature and Use were absolutely perverted and destroy'd, and are not yet fully restor'd by the purest Reformations in *Christendom*. But we must not forget how *Tertullian* himself has acknowledg'd that for their frequent *Crossings* and other *Baptismal* Rites, for their scrupling to let any of the *Bread* and *Wine* fall to the Ground, or to receive them from any hand but the *Priest's*, with the like Ceremonies, they had no colour of † Au-

M 3                      tho-

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\* Harum & aliarum ejusmodi Disciplinarum, si legem exoptules Scripturarum, nullam invenies; Traditio tibi prætenditur auctrix, Consuetudo confirmatrix, & Fides observatrix. *Pag.* 102.



Sect. 3. *thority from the Scriptures, but only from Custom and Tradition.*

93. Now their own Advantage being the Motive that put the Primitive Clergy upon reviving *Mystery*, they quickly erected themselves by its Assistance into a separate and politick Body, tho not so soon into their various Orders and Degrees. For in the two first Centuries we meet with no *Subdeacons, Readers*, or the like; much less with the Names or Dignities of *Popes, Cardinals, Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Archbishops, Primates, Suffragans, Archdeacons, Deans, Chancellors, Vicars*, or their numerous Dependants and Retinue. But in small time *Mystery* made way for those, and several other Usurpations upon Mankind, under pretence of *Labourers in the Lord's Vineyard*.

94. The Degrees or Constitutions concerning *Ceremonies and Discipline*, to encrease the Splendour of this new State, did strangely affect, stupify, and amaze the Minds of the ignorant People; and made them believe they were in good earnest Mediators between God and Men, that could fix  
Sanc-

Sanctity to certain Times, Places, Persons, or Actions. They seem'd almost a different and more divine Species of Creatures, distinguishing themselves from other Men in their *Garb*, in their manner of living by *Tithes* and *Donations*, in their *separate Places* at Church, and several other ways. By this means the *Clergy* were able to do any thing; they engross'd at length the sole Right of interpreting *Scripture*, and with it claim'd *Infallibility*, to their Body.

95. This is the true Origin and Progress of the *Christian Mysteries*; and we may observe how great a share of their Establishment is owing to *Ceremonies*. These never fail to take off the Mind from the Substance of *Religion*, and lead Men into dangerous Mistakes: for *Ceremonies* being easily observ'd, every one thinks himself religious enough that exactly performs them. But there is nothing so naturally opposite as *CEREMONY* and *CHRISTIANITY*. The latter discovers Religion naked to all the World, and the former delivers it under mystical Representations of a meerly arbitrary Signification.

Sect. 3. 96. It is visible then that *Ceremonies* perplex instead of explaining; but supposing they made things easier, then that would be the best Religion which had most of them, for they are generally, and may all be made, equally significative. A Candle put into the Hands of the *Baptized*, to denote the Light of the Gospel, is every whit as good a *Ceremony* as to make the Sign of the Cross upon their Fore-heads, in token of owning Christ for their Master and Saviour. Wine, Milk, and Honey signify spiritual Nourishment, Strength, and Gladness; as well as standing at the *Gospel* betokens our Readiness to hear or profess it.

97. In short, there's no degree of *Enthusiasm* higher than placing Religion in such Fooleries; nor any thing so base as by these fraudulent Arts to make the *Gospel* of no effect, unless as far as it serves a Party. But I shall have a better Occasion of exhausting the Subject of *Ceremonies* elsewhere, I treat of 'em here only as they made up the *Gentile Mysteries*, and were afterwards brought in to constitute those of the *Christians*. But as the  
vast



Ch. 6.  
 vast multitudes of the latter quickly render'd all secret Rites almost impossible, so to preserve the *Mystery*, things were purposely made downright unintelligible, or very perplex'd. In this Point our pretended *Christians* outdid all the *Mysteries* of the *Heathens*; for the Honour of these might be destroy'd by Discovery, or the babling Tongue of any initiated Person: But the new *Mysteries* were thus securely plac'd above the Reach of all Sense and Reason. Nay, so jealous were the **CLERGY** of their own Order, lest any of 'em should irreligiously unfold those sublime *Mysteries* to the profanely inquisitive **L A I T Y**, that they thought fit to put it as much out of the Power of the Holy Tribe it self, as out of ours, to understand them; and so it continues, in a great measure, to this day.

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## The CONCLUSION.

**T**HUS I have endeavour'd to shew others, what I'm fully convinc'd of my self, that there is no *MYSTERY* in *CHRISTIANITY*, or the most perfect *Religion*; and that by Consequence nothing *contradictory* or *inconceivable*, however made an *Article of Faith*, can be contain'd in the *Gospel*, if it be really the Word of God: for I have hitherto argu'd only upon this Supposition, for the Reasons to be seen towards the end of the Preface.

Notwithstanding all Pretences that may be made to the contrary, it is evident that no particular *Instances* or *Doctrines* of any sort can serve for a proper Answer to this DISCOURSE; for, as long as the Reasons of it hold good, whatever *Instance* can be alledg'd must either be found not *mysterious*, or, if it prove a  
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MYSTERY, not divinely *reveal'd*. There is no middle way, that I can see. When those Passages of *Scripture* I have cited for my Assertion, are either reconcil'd to such as any would bring against me, or prov'd not to be understood by me; when my Arguments against all *inconceivable Mysteries*, and the absurdity of God's *revealing* any such *Mysteries*, are confuted, 'tis time enough then for others to produce *Examples*, or for me to consider 'em. And tho by convincing People that *all the Parts of their RELIGION must not only be in themselves, but to them also must appear, sound and intelligible*, I might justly leave every one to discover to himself the Reasonableness or Unreasonableness of his Religion (which is no difficult Business, when once Men are perswaded that they have a right to do it;) yet the Duties I owe GOD and the World oblige me to proceed further according as I enjoy Health or Leisure, without limiting my self as to any time, that being a thing in no Man's Power to command at his Pleasure.

My



My next Task therefore is (God willing) to prove the Doctrines of the *New Testament* perspicuous, possible, and most worthy of God, as well as all calculated for the highest Benefits of Man. Some will not thank me, it's probable, for so useful an Undertaking; and others will make me a *Heretick* in grain for what I have perform'd already. But as it is Duty, and no Body's Applause, which is the Rule of my Actions; so, God knows, I no more value this cheap and ridiculous Nick-name of a *Heretick* than *Paul* did before me: for I acknowledg. no *ORTHODOXY* but the *TRUTH*; and, I'm sure, where-ever the *TRUTH* is, there must be also the *CHURCH*, of God I mean, and not any Human Faction or Policy. Besides, the Imputation of *Heterodoxy* being now as liberal upon the slightest Occasions, out of Ignorance, Passion, or Malice, as in the days of *Ireneus* and *Epiphanius*, it is many times instead of a Reproach the greatest Honour imaginable.

Some

Some good Men may be apt to say, that, supposing my Opinion never so true, it may notwithstanding occasion much harm; because when People find themselves impos'd upon in any part of *Religion*, they are ready to call the whole in question. This Offence is plainly taken, not given; and my Design is nothing the less good, if ill-dispos'd Persons abuse it, as they frequently do *Learning*, *Reason*, *Scripture*, and the best things in the World. But it is visible to every one that they are the *Contradictions* and *Mysteries* unjustly charg'd upon *Religion*, which occasion so many to become *Deists* and *Atheists*. And it should be consider'd likewise that when any, not acquainted with it, are dazl'd by the sudden Splendor of the *Truth*, their Number is not comparable to theirs who see clearly by its Light. Because several turn'd *Libertines* and *Atheists* when **PRIEST-CRAFT** was laid so open at the *Reformation*, were *Luther*, *Calvin*, or *Zwinglius* to be blam'd for it? or which should weigh most with them, these few prejudic'd *Scep-*  
*ticks*,

*ticks*, or those thousands they converted from the Superstitions of *Rome*? I'm therefore for giving no Quarter to *ERROR* under any pretence; and will be sure, wherever I have Ability or Opportunity, to expose it in its true Colours, without rendring my Labour ineffectual, by weakly mining or softening of any thing.

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*F I N I S.*

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A N  
A P O L O G Y

F O R

Mr. *TOLAND*,

In a LETTER from Himself to a  
Member of the House of Commons  
in *Ireland*; written the day before  
his Book was resolv'd to be burnt  
by the Committee of Religion.

To which is prefix'd a NARRATIVE  
containing the Occasion of the said  
LETTER.

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*Diis proximus Ille est*  
*Quem* RATIO non IRA movet, Claudian.

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L O N D O N,  
Printed in the Year MDCCII.



# THE DOCTOR

## THE DOCTOR

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# A N A R R A T I V E

Containing the Occasion of the following  
L E T T E R.

**I** Promise not to give any account at this time of the Controversy occasion'd by Mr. Toland's Book, nor to enter into the Merits of the Cause on either side. His Adversaries seem not yet weary of writing against him ; and when they have once done, it will be early enough then for him to reply, if he sees reason so to do : For it would be an endless labour to make *Answers* severally to so many as may concern themselves in this Dispute. My Design is only to shew what Treatment he receiv'd from some People in *Ireland*, as far as that may serve to set the *Letter* annex'd to this Narrative in its proper light. And I shall take care to insert nothing, but such notorious matters of Fact that no observing Person in *Dublin*, or I might say perhaps in the Kingdom, can pretend ignorance concerning them, or deny them to be true.

Mr. Toland was scarcely arriv'd in that Country, when he found himself warmly

attack'd from the *Pulpit*, which at the beginning could not but startle the People, who till then were equal Strangers to him and his Book; yet they became in a little time so well accustom'd to this Subject, that it was as much expected of course as if it had been prescrib'd in the Rubrick. This occasion'd a Noble Lord to give it for a reason why he frequented not the Church as formerly, that instead of his Saviour JESUS CHRIST, one *John Toland* was all the discourse there. But how unworthy a Member soever of the *Christian Religion* Mr. *Toland* may be, he's still so sensible of the Obedience he justly owes to its most Divine Precepts, that he dares not allow himself to make any returns in the same Dialect to what was liberally utter'd against him in that place. We read, an *Archangel* was not permitted to rail against the very *Devil*; and if Mr. *Toland* had not innumerable Passages of the *Gospel* to restrain him, yet the Reverence all Men owe to their own Persons join'd to the Rules of common Civility, would be powerful enough to keep him from bestowing any indecent Expressions or Reflections upon his Opposers. Nor is he such a Stranger to the former Ages or the present, as not to perceive that passionate or violent Proceedings never yet

Jude 9.



yet gain'd Credit to a *Cause*; nor produc'd any other Effects upon the Enemies of it, but to make 'em abhor it the more.

But when this rough handling of him in the *Pulpit* (where he could not have word about) prov'd insignificant, the *Grand Jury* was sollicit'd to present him for a Book that was written and publish'd in *England*. And to gain the readier Compliance, the Presentment of the *Grand Jury* of *Middlesex* was printed in *Dublin* with an emphatical Title, and cry'd about the Streets. So Mr. *Toland* was accordingly presented there the last day of the Term in the Court of *King's Bench*, the *Jurors* not grounding their proceeding upon any particular Passages of his Book, which most of 'em never read, and those that did confess'd not to understand. Thus in the Reign of *Henry VI.* one \* *John Stephens* was presented by a Jury in *Southwark*, as a Man, say they, *we know not what to make of him, and that bath Books we know not what they are.* In the mean time those of either Sex who had any intimacy with Mr. *Toland*, or that favour'd him with their familiar Conversation, were branded as his *Proselytes*, and Lists of their Names industrious-

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\* *Bacon's Historical Discourse of the Government of England, Part 2. cap. 17. pag. 161.*

ly given about ; altho those worthy Persons (for he always chose the best Company) had never discours'd him of Religion, nor had many of 'em then seen his Book. And so far was he himself from making his Opinions the Subject of his common Talk, that, notwithstanding repeated Provocations, he purposely declin'd speaking of 'em at all ; which made his Adversaries (who slipt no handle of decrying him) insinuate that he was not the real Author of the Piece going under his Name. But if they were serious, and this was not another Artifice to make him own it, I would fain know what made them so angry with a Man whom they ought therefore to despise ; For if there be any Poison (as I hope there is none) in that Book, the spreading of it in *Ireland* is wholly owing to the Management of those, who would be thought most to oppose it.

We must not forget that in a few days after the present *Lords Justices* of that Kingdom landed, the Recorder of *Dublin*, Mr. *Hancock*, presented Mr. *Toland* to their Excellencies after a very obliging manner ; for in his Congratulatory Harangue in the name of his Corporation, whereof by the way he spoke not a word, he begg'd their *Lordships* would protect the CHURCH  
from

from all its Enemies, but particularly from the *Tolandists*, a Sect, I am sure, those Noble Persons ne'er heard of before. The late *Lords Justices*, the Earls of *Montrath* and *Drogheda*, were more neglected at least in the same Speech; tho all *Ireland* cannot without the blackest Ingratitude but acknowledg, that they never liv'd before under a more prudent, just, and peaceable Administration: For as they gave no occasions of Complaint in their Government, so were there no Murmurings against them but only of such, as, through a perpetual desire of Change, are always Enemies to their own and the Country's Happiness. Mr. *Toland* being thus made a *Heresiarch* in so publick a place, where all the Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdom then in Town were present, occasion'd every body to hunt for his Book which was very scarce; and his Enemies also took that Pretext of denominating all his Acquaintance *Tolandists*, how different soever they were from him or one another in their Sentiments.

From the *Pulpit*, from the *Jury*, and the *Court*, he must take his next turn at the *Press*, from whence there issu'd a Book said to be an Answer to him in particular, and to all others who set up *Reason and Evidence*



in opposition to *Revelation and Mysteries*. This imports that Mr. Toland made *Reason* and *Revelation* contradictory. But how well the Author of the said Book, Mr. Peter Brown, Senior Fellow of Trinity College near Dublin, has prov'd this or the rest of his Undertaking, is referr'd to the impartial Reader's Judgment. If hard Language would do instead of strong Arguments, we might easily determine who had the better end of the Controversy; and if you believe Mr. Brown himself, he assures you that *if it can be shewn where one Link of his reasoning fails, he'll make it up again so firm, that it shall never be undone*. Indeed I don't believe Mr. Toland designs to give him any trouble of that kind, so that his *Reasons* are like to continue as good as ever they were. But Mr. Brown's Book comes now under Consideration as it was one of the Machines invented to render Mr. Toland dangerous or odious. And this he does not only by endeavouring all along to prove him a *most inveterate Enemy to all Revel'd Religion*; but he expressly solicits the Civil Magistrate to take a course with him, which looks not very generous in an *Answerer*, how much concern soever he may pretend for his Faith. In one place he says, *I have no more to do here but to deliver*

liver him up into the hands of our Governors. We may confute his Errors, but 'tis they only can suppress his Insolence; we only can endeavor to heal those already infected, 'tis they alone can hinder the Infection from spreading further. And afterwards he adds, Here Pag. 144. again I would deliver him into the hands of the Magistrate, not mov'd by any heat of Passion, but by such a Zeal as becomes every Christian to have for his Religion. I am fully satisfy'd this murdering Zeal is not inspir'd by Genuin Christianity; and as for his want of Passion, the Inquisitors themselves shew as much seeming Reluctance against killing or maiming of those whom they procure to be condemn'd for Hereticks. At the very instant they deliver 'em over to the Secular Power, they address themselves to the Magistrate in these terms; *We most earnestly beseech you, my Lord Judg, that for the love of God, and from a sense of Piety and Mercy, as well as out of regard to our Entreaties, you would neither inflict the loss of Life or Limb upon this miserable Creature.\** Tho at the sametime, if the Judg should take

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\* Domine Judex, rogamus vos cum omni affectu quo possimus, ut amore Dei, pietatis & misericordiz intuitu, & nostrorum interventu precaminum, miserrimo huic nullum mortis vel mutilationis periculum inferatis.

the holy Fathers at their word, they would infallibly excommunicate him for his ready Obedience, whereof they are so fond in all cases but those of *Justice and Clemency*, which is the Motto of their Standard. Here we may observe how strangely Words of a good signification may be detorted to countenance very ill Actions. Thus to abuse a Man is in the Language of some term'd *Zeal*, and so it is to murder him in that of others; nor were the barbarous *Irish* wanting to sanctify their *Massacre* by that Name.

But lest the broaching of simple *Heresies* should not serve the turn, Mr. Toland must by all means be made the *Head of a Sect*, and of no ordinary one; for, if you credit Mr. Brown, he designs to be *as famous an Impostor as Mahomet*. To confirm this Character, which was well enough invented to amuse the People with vain Terrors, there was a ridiculous Story handed about; whether true or false God knows; for Mr. Toland remembers nothing of the matter. 'Tis said, in short, that about the fourteenth Year of his Age he gravely declar'd he would be the *Head of a Sect* e'er he was Thirty; and before he was forty he should make as great a stir in the Commonwealth as *Cromwel* ever did. *Risus teneatur*. Here's an old Prophecy found in a Bog with



with a witness, and which Mr. Hancock and Mr. Brown have labour'd to fulfil in part, that superstitious Folks might tremulously apprehend the event of the rest. Mr. Brown says, *The real design of this Man is plainly no other than what he formerly declar'd, and what he openly affects, to be the Head of a Sect; and doubts not but he has a great deal more to say, whenever this new Sect of his becomes so numerous that they shall outbrave the Laws, and labour for a publick Reformation of the Mysterious Doctrines of the Gospel.* Would any body believe this, did they not see it plainly own'd in Print? Nay he tells us that *he has trac'd this Heresiarch from the time he first gave out he would be Head of a Sect before he was thirty Years of Age, till he became an Author, and from thence to his coming into Ireland to spread his Heresies, and put his Design in execution.* I assure him he wants two Years still of Thirty, and if his *Disciples* (as they're call'd) take not other measures than he did to erect that same Sect in Ireland, St. Patrick may securely possess his Apostleship in that Kingdom till Doomsday, which is an Honour Mr. Toland does not envy him. I ought not by any means to forget here the Sagacity of a certain Gentleman, who wonder'd at his Impudence for presuming to set up

Pag. 164.

Pag. 166.

Pag. 121.

a new Religion in their Country, where he had not a foot of Land; which inclines me to believe he has met with better Records of the Apostles Possessions than Mr. Toland could in all his reading.

Well then, if all this won't do, what shall we make of him next? He must e'en be represented as dangerous to the Government; and truly so he's like to be if Irish Presages hold good, for their Prophecies were never worth a farthing. *How far*  
 Pag. 172. *Men in power, says Mr. Brown, according to their several Stations, are obliged to intermeddle in point of Conscience, I shall not now enquire, But sure I am in point of Policy it is become no less than necessary: for the Writers of this strain have given broad hints that they are as little friends to our Government, as our Religion. This Man can say that MAGISTRATES are made for the PEOPLE, and every one knows what Doctrines of REBELLION Men are wont to insinuate by this SAYING. O! is it thereabouts then? Why truly, the Doctrine of Passive Obedience was exploded by this same Saying, which Mr. Toland acknowledges to be one fair Quotation. James the Second was justly abdicated according to this Saying, because he was an Enemy to the People for whom he*  
 was

was made a *King*; and our most Glorious Hero *William* the Third, the Restorer of Universal Peace and Liberty, was invested with the Supreme Power by the honest *People* of *Great Britain*, for whose good he has indefatigably employ'd it ever since, in vindicating, settling, and enlarging their Civil and Religious Rights. Mr. *Brown* has been pleas'd to say that Mr. *Toland* was proud of running down three Kingdoms with one cross Question, which is, *How can a Man believe what he* Pag. 122.  
*does not know?* and he that does so, knows not what he believes. Now I would gladly be resolv'd by him, for whom the *Magistrates* are made unless for the *People*? at  
 Were they made for themselves? or whether the *People* were made for the *Magistrates*? But he adds, *that this sort of Men* Pag. 172.  
*deserve to be look'd to, that their numbers grow formidable;* and makes little doubt but *their design is at length to shew us, That* Pag. 173.  
*all Dominion as well as Religion is founded in Reason.* Let him assure himself they will never begin to shew that, for they have clearly prov'd it long ago. What Dominion is not founded in Reason, must be doubtless unreasonable, and consequently Tyrannical. There was nothing more reasonable than for Men first to unite  
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that he was born there. So his Countrymen treated him in this respect like his Majesty's good Subjects of *Guernsey*; who, when they are in *France* are call'd English Rogues, and in *England* French Dogs.

The last Effort, except the charge of *Socinianism*, to blast him, was to make him pass for a rigid *Nonconformist*. Mr. Toland will never deny but the real Simplicity of the *Dissenters* Worship, and the seeming Equity of their Discipline (into which being so young he could not distinctly penetrate) did gain extraordinarily upon his Affections, just as he was newly deliver'd from the insupportable Yoke of the most Pompous and Tyrannical Policy that ever enslav'd Mankind under the name or shew of *Religion*. But when greater Experience and more Years had a little ripen'd his Judgment, he easily perceiv'd that the Differences were not so wide as to appear irreconcilable, or at least, that Men, who were sound *Protestants* on both sides, should barbarously cut one anothers Throats, or indeed give any disturbance to the Society about them. And as soon as he understood the late Heats and Animosities did not totally (if at all) proceed from a Concern for mere Religion, he allow'd himself a latitude in several things, that  
would

would have been matter of scruple to him before. His Travels increas'd, and the Study of Ecclesiastical History perfected this Disposition, wherein he continues to this Hour: for, whatever his own Opinion of those Differences be, yet he finds so essential an Agreement between the *French, Dutch, English, Scotish, and other Protestants*, that he's resolv'd never to lose the Benefit of an Instructive Discourse in any of their Churches upon that score; and it must be a Civil not a Religious Interest that can engage him against any of these Parties, not thinking all their private Notions wherein they disagree worth endangering, much less subverting, the Publick Peace of a Nation. If this makes a Man a *Nonconformist*, then Mr. Toland is one unquestionably. And so he is, if he thinks the *Dissenters* ought not to be molested in their Goods or Persons, nor excluded from any of their Native Rights, because they have a different Set of Thoughts from him or others, so long as none of their Principles are repugnant to good Government. He believes them likewise to be a true and considerable part of the *Protestant Religion* (for they have demonstrated themselves to be stanch *Patriots*) notwithstanding any Error or Weak-

ness whereof they may be guilty in his Judgment. But this same reason will prove him as sound a Member of the establish'd Church of *England*; being perswaded the narrow Sentiments of a few about *Communion* is not any profest Doctrin of that Church: nor would there be any Separation from it in this Realm, were all others of his mind. 'Tis visible this Declaration is not made to curry Favour with one (as many do) while in their Hearts they are devoted to the other side. But Mr. *Toland's* Opinion being frequently demanded as to this Point, he now delivers it once for all; for he will never condescend to court any body of Men with preference to all others, further than he sees ground for it; and to this, as his settl'd Judgment; he's resolv'd to adhere, tho it should hazard the inevitable Ruin of his Fortune or Reputation with all Parties.

*Atheism* is now become so common an Accusation in every Person's mouth, who is displeas'd at the Rudeness of others for not complimenting him with their Assent to his Opinions, that, altho in it self it be the most atrocious and unnatural Crime whereof a reasonable Creature can be guilty yet is it not otherwise minded than as a word of course which indicates a  
world



world of Inconsiderateness and Rancor. When Mr. Toland us'd to be traduc'd in Ireland for *Deism* with many other Opinions, and his Friends demanded of his Accusers where they made those Discoveries in his Writings, the ready Answer always was, that truly they had never read the Book, and by the Grace of God never would; but that they receiv'd their Information from such as were proper Judges of the thing. O how inseparable is *Popery* from *Ignorance*! And what is the source of all *Popery* but *Implicit Belief* wherever it is found? As to what the Author of the Letter to a Convocation-man says of a Congregation *de propaganda Infidelitate*, no body needs be asham'd of so good Company as the present Bishop of Salisbury, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Commons of England themselves, whom he not only libels with most false and vile Insinuations, but even his Majesty's own Person as a Prince of no Religion, which none that had any Religion durst say of a King who is so great a Friend to it by his Patronage and Example. Mr. Toland was once writing an Answer to this Author; but he laid aside his Papers when he understood that such able Men had undertaken him, as the Reverend

Dr. Wake, and the Ingenious Author of the Letter to a Parliament Man.

But some People not being satisfy'd, it seems, with all that past, and thinking Mr. Toland should never have enough on't, concluded at last to bring his Book before the Parliament. And therefore on Saturday the 14th day of August, it was mov'd in the Committee of Religion, that the Book intitul'd *Christianity not Mystrious*, should be brought before them, and accordingly it was order'd that the said Book should the Saturday following be brought into the Committee. That day the Committee sat not; but the next Saturday, which was the 28th day of August, there met a very full Committee, wherein this business was a great while debated. Several Persons eminent for their Birth, good Qualities or Fortunes, oppos'd the whole Proceeding, being of opinion it was neither proper nor convenient for them to meddle with a thing of that nature. But when this Point was without much Argument carri'd against them, they insisted that the Passages which gave Offence in the Book should be read; so those wonderful Objections were made which are clear'd in the Letter subjoin'd: and then the Committee was adjourn'd till the 4th of September. That day, after  
seve-

several Gentlemen had spoke to those Objections, they urg'd at last, according to Mr. Toland's own desire, that he should be call'd to answer in Person, to declare the Sense of his Book, and his Design in writing it. But this favour being peremptorily deny'd, an *Honourable Member* went to the Bar, and offer'd a *Letter* to be read which he had receiv'd that Morning from Mr. Toland, containing what Satisfaction he intended to give the *Committee*, had they thought fit to let him speak for himself. But this was likewise refus'd, and the *Committee* came immediately to those Resolutions, to which the House agreed after some Debate, on Thursday following being the 9th of September, viz. *That the Book entitled Christianity not Mysteries, containing several Heretical Doctrines contrary to the Christian Religion and the establish'd Church of Ireland, be publicly burnt by the hands of the Common Hangman. Likewise, That the Author thereof John Toland be taken into the Custody of the Serjeant at Arms, (which he took care to prevent) and be prosecuted by Mr. Attorney General, for writing and publishing the said Book. They order'd too, that an Address should be made to the Lords Justices to give Directions that no more Copies of that Book be brought into*

Votes of  
the H. of  
C. of Ire-  
land,



the Kingdom, and to prevent the selling of those already imported. Their Sentence was executed on the Book the Saturday following, which was the 11th of September, before the *Parliament-House Gate*, and also in the open Street before the *Town-House*; the Sheriffs and all the Constables attending.

One very singular Passage we must not omit, which is, that the same day the Book was to be condemn'd there came abroad a printed Sheet, wherein, to terrify any body from appearing publickly for Mr. Toland, were contain'd the following words: *Now let those consider this, says the Writer of that Paper, whether within doors or without; and whether the Vindication, or even the excusing this Book or the Author, or the ridiculing or otherwise baffling the just Prosecution or Censure of it and him, be not truly the denying of our Saviour before Men; and whether such may not assuredly expect to be deny'd of him in the presence of his Father and the holy Angels, and all the World at the last day.* This strange Denunciation had no effect on those who all along appear'd in Mr. Toland's behalf, tho much out-number'd by those of the contrary Opinion. In the Committee it was mov'd by one that Mr. Toland himself should be burnt, as by another

A Letter  
upon Mr.  
Toland's  
Book to  
J. C. Esq;  
pag. 4.

ther that he should be made to burn his Book with his own hands ; and a third desir'd it should be done before the Door of the House, that he might have the pleasure of treading the Ashes under his feet.

I forbear making any remarks here either upon the design of burning Books in general, or this in particular ; nor will I shew, as well I might, how fruitless this sort of proceeding has prov'd in all Ages, since the Custom was first introduc'd by the *Papish Inquisitors*, who perform'd that Execution on the Book when they could not seize the Author whom they had destin'd to the Flames. Neither will I insist upon the great Stop and Discouragement which this Practice brings to all Learning and Discoveries ; but, without further Digression, I shall now leave the Reader to peruse Mr. Toland's *Letter*, and to judg for himself whether it would have given him satisfaction, had he been a Member of the *House of Commons*.

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*Mr. TOLAND's Letter to a Member of the House of Commons in IRELAND, &c.*

Dublin, Septemb. 3. 1697.

S I R,

**W**Hen the *Christian Religion* is attack'd by Atheists and others, they constantly charge it with *Contradiction* or *Obscurity*; and Mr. Toland's design in the Publication of his Book was to defend *Christianity* from such unjust Imputations, as he more than once declares in his Preface, and as he thinks it every Christian's Duty to do, according to his Ability or Opportunity. If we might judge of his Performance by his profest Intentions, we should conclude it to be extraordinary good; but we must on the other hand reckon it as bad, if, without further Examination, we regard the strange Outcries that are made against it both from the *Pulpit* and the *Press*. That a Man should be run down because it is the fashion, or by

In:



*Interested* Persons, and such as are influenc'd by 'em, is nothing strange; for one way or other the like happens every day: but that a Book should be condemn'd by wholesale, without assigning the particular Faults or Mistakes in it, and by many that never read it, is visibly unjust. What has contributed to make Mr. *Toland* (whom neither his Age, nor Fortune, nor Preferment renders formidable) the Object of so much Heat and Noise, and after what manner his Enemies of all sorts have treated him under a zealous pretence, he's like very speedily to inform such of the World as will please to concern themselves. But not considering the Honourable *House of Commons*, or your self in particular, among the number of his *Adversaries* but as his *Judges*, he thinks convenient to clear those few Points which are reported to afford matter of Exception to some in the *Committee of Religion*. But, before this be done, he desires that two or three Particulars may be a little consider'd.

Mr. *Toland*, in the first place, is of opinion it portends much Happiness to the Nation, that the *Commons* (who have all the right imaginable to it) should take the cognizance of such things into their own Hands. And tho his Book should, as it's

very probable, happen to fall under their Censure, yet his love to Mankind cannot but make him extremely pleas'd with the Consequences he foresees must necessarily follow from such an authentick Precedent in this Country, where it was most peculiarly wanting. Nor does he think it more reasonable for him to be angry at his private ill luck, than it would be for some to be out of love with *Parliaments* themselves (which is the best Constitution in the Universe) because they are *mistaken* sometimes, and that an Act is *repeal'd* in one Session which was establish'd in another; not considering that such an Inconvenience is infinitely overballanc'd by several excellent Laws, and by the Remedy that may likewise be had to this pretended Disorder from that very Court, upon better *Information* or *Temper*.

Secondly, Mr. Toland does not complain that he alone in the Kingdom is disturb'd for his Opinion, but is heartily glad that no more are troubl'd upon that account. For as he takes *Persecution* to be one of the chief Marks and Pillars of the *Antichristian Church*, so he looks upon an impartial *Liberty* of writing and speaking whatever is not destructive of *Civil Society*, to be the greatest advantage of any Country,

try, whether the Learning, or the Commerce, or the very Peace and Tranquillity thereof be consider'd. " Yet it cannot  
 " but look mighty odly to indifferent Persons, that all the *Dissenters* from the  
 " Establish'd Church, that the *Papists* who  
 " pervert Christianity it self, that several  
 " declar'd *Socinian*, ay and *Jacobite* Pamphlets should escape the burning Zeal of  
 " those, who so furiously prosecute one  
 " young Man only for the suspected Consequences of his Book, as if the very Being or Destruction of all *Religion* depended upon the fate of him, or his  
 " Writings.

Left out in  
the Original  
Copy,

Thirdly, As for the *Errors* commonly laid to Mr. Toland's charge, they are so various and inconsistent with one another, that no Man of ordinary sense could possibly hold them all at a time; and being credited by his Enemies without book, he may with more Justice deny than they can affirm them. He's not therefore oblig'd to take notice of any thing but what is alledg'd in formal words, or plainly inferr'd from his Book. Indeed some Consequences an Author might not perceive, which should render him the more excusable; but Mr. Toland confesses he foresaw several Consequences of his Book, even to part of  
 the



the Opposition with which it has met, tho not that (after the Pulpits, Presses, and Juries) the *Commons* of *Ireland* should likewise honour it with their Animadversion.

Now what is said to have been objected in the *Committee* is, First, That the very Title *CHRISTIANITY NOT MYSTERIOUS* is Heretical. Whether the *Committee* decrees, a new or declares an old *Heresy*, Mr. *Toland* neither knows nor is much concern'd to understand, being conscious to himself of neither. If the Title be made good in the Book, 'tis orthodox or sound enough; and if not, yet he's still to seek for the *Heresy* of it. “ If it be an  
 “ old Opinion, others would gladly be  
 “ inform'd in which Century it was first  
 “ taught, who the Author of it might be,  
 “ or by what Council it was condemn'd:  
 “ and if it be a new Notion, they desire  
 “ likewise to know whether the *House of*  
 “ *Commons* alone can decree it *Heresy*, be-  
 “ ing yet perfect strangers to any such  
 “ Power claim'd by that Honourable Bo-  
 “ dy.

But 'tis affirm'd, that by his Title he rejects the *Mysteries* of the Gospel. If by *Mysteries* be meant the *Doctrines* themselves, he denies none of them; but that after Revelation they are not *mysterious* or obscure,  
 he

he still maintains for the Honour of *Christianity*. A great many without doors very wisely conclude that he believes not the Doctrines, because he thinks they are *plain*, and therefore the more *credible*; for that's all he means by *not mysterious*. But some People, otherwise credulous enough, believe no body capable of rendring that clear and easy, which to themselves seems difficult or insuperable.

It was likewise objected, that he makes a doubt whether the *Scriptures* be of Divine Authority. That bare Expression, *If the Gospel be really the word of God*, imports no such matter, but very frequently the contrary; as for example, *If the Gospel be true, this frame of the World shall be dissolv'd*; which is not to question, but more emphatically to assert the truth of the Proposition. But this, I confess, is nothing to the case before us. The words in the Conclusion of the Book are these, *Nothing contradictory or* Pag. 170 *inconceivable, however made an Article of Faith, can be contain'd in the Gospel, if it be really the Word of God: for I have hitherto argued only upon this Supposition, for the Reason to be seen towards the end of the Preface.* The sense of the words then must be determin'd by that Reason; and the Passage referr'd to in the Preface is this, *viz.*  
In

- Pref. p. 24.* In the following Discourse, which is the first of three, &c. the Divinity of the New Testament is taken for granted. In the next Discourse, &c. I attempt a particular and rational Explanation of the reputed Mysteries of the Gospel. And in the third, I demonstrate the Verity of Divine Revelation against Atheists and all Enemies of Reveal'd Religion. Now is it not something strange that a Man should question what he takes for granted, and which the Method he follow'd would not permit him to prove before his time, that is, not form the Conclusion before the Premises? In one place he positively affirms
- Pag. 33.* the Scriptures to contain the brightest Characters of Divinity. But that the force of Calumny may evidently appear, let this other Passage of the same Book be consider'd:
- Pag. 46.* What we discours'd of Reason before, says he, and Revelation now, being duly weigh'd, all the Doctrines and Precepts of the New Testament (if it be indeed Divine) must consequently agree with Natural Reason and our own ordinary Ideas. **THIS** every considerate and well dispos'd Person will find by the careful perusal of it; and whoever undertakes this Task will confess the Gospel not to be **HIDDEN** from us, nor as far off, but very nigh us, in our Mouths and in our **HEARTS**. But this whole Chapter must have been transcrib'd,
- were



were all that's to our purpose in it to be nicely quoted ; for every word of it from N<sup>o</sup> 22. to the end, is a Justification of the Method and Stile of the *New Testament*. Yet lest any suspicion of Fallacy might remain where the Particle *IF* occurs, I demand what Declaration can be conceived in stronger terms than the following Passage ; for you shall be troubl'd with no more, tho I might easily cite forty others relating to this Head. The words are, *Whether or no Christianity is mysterious, ought to be naturally decided by the New Testament, wherein the Christian Faith is originally contain'd.* I heartily desire to put the Case upon this Issue, I appeal to this Tribunal ; for did I not infinitely prefer the Truth I learn from these sacred Records to all other Considerations, I should never assert that there are no Mysteries in Christianity. The Scriptures have engag'd me in this Error, if it be one ; and I will sooner be reputed Heterodox with these only on my side, than to pass for Orthodox with the whole World, and have them against me.

It was likewise objected that Mr. Toland shew'd not a due Respect to CHRIST, because he always stiles him in his Book barely CHRIST, or at most only JESUS CHRIST.

CHRIST. If this be any Disrespect,\* the most Orthodox Divines are as guilty of it in their Writings; and the *Apostles* themselves speak of him without any additional Titles a great many times in the Gospel. 'Tis otherwise, I grant, when some special occasion requires them to be more express; and when Mr. Toland was declaring the

Pref. p. 26. Head of his Church, he says, *I am neither of Paul, nor of Cephas, nor of Apollos, but of the Lord JESUS CHRIST alone, who is the Author and Finisher of my Faith.* And here I cannot forbear admiring how Mr. Toland should be deem'd an *Arian* or *Socinian*, seeing, for ought appears in his Book, he may lay a better claim to any other Sect, except the *Papists*, than to them; for these three are the only Parties he opposes by name. But if his Religion is to be really discover'd by his Book, 'tis utterly impossible he should be either an *Arian* or *Socinian*. They both of 'em (from different Notions) believe JESUS CHRIST to be a meer Creature-God, which Mr. Toland does not; and, to mend one Absurdity by a greater, they join in paying their Deify'd Creature Divine Worship, which Mr. Toland judges impious and ridiculous. His own words are these; *Tho the Socinians disown this Practice* (of admitting

• Pag. 27. Con-

Contradictions in Religion) *I am mistaken if either they or the Arians can make their Notions of a Dignify'd and Creature-God capable of Divine Worship, appear more reasonable than the extravagancies of other Sects touching the Article of the Trinity; such as the Whimsies of EUTYCHES, GENTILIS; and the rest.* In short, Mr. Toland had no natural occasion to declare his Sentiments relating to CHRIST's Person, that and the other particular Doctrines of the Gospel being the Subject of the second and third Books he promises, and by which alone his Conformity or Dissent with the *Common Christianity* is to be discern'd. Nor had his Adversaries from the Press run into so many gross Mistakes, and been at the trouble of several no less unhappy than needless Conjectures, had they but Patience or Phlegm enough to attend the Publication of those Pieces.

It was objected also that he slighted the *Sacraments* (which is a term he never uses) by making them bare *Ceremonies*. That he cal'd 'em any where mere *Ceremonies* he absolutely denies, tho he now affirms with all Christians, that the Actions of *breaking Bread* and *washing with Water* are as much *Ceremonial* under the *New Testament*, as *Circumcision* or the *Passover* were under the

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Old,



Pag. 153.

*Old.* But when Mr. Toland had'a just occasion to mention the *Sacraments*, tho not to declare his Opinion concerning their Nature or Efficacy, 'tis evident he speaks there of those numerous *Ceremonies* of Human Institution which were added to 'em by the mistaken Zeal or Prudence of the Primitive Christians, *who*, as he says, *not having the least Precedent for any Ceremonies from the Gospel, excepting Baptism and the Supper, strangely disguis'd and transform'd these by adding to them the Pagan Mystick Rites;* and of these appending Ceremonies he gives a large Catalogue in that Chapter. But he's so far from making any comparison between *Christianity* and the *Orgies* of *Bacchus*, as was likewise alledg'd, that on the contrary he severely handles those who blended such Corruptions with pure Christianity. *Thus*, says he, *lest Simplicity, the noblest Ornament of the Truth, should expose it to the Contempt of Unbelievers, Christianity was put upon an equal level with the Mysteries of Ceres, or the Orgies of Bacchus.* To this may be added another Passage where he affirms, *he could draw his Parallel between Heathenism and those early Superstitions much larger, to shew how Christianity became mysterious, and how so Divine an Institution did, through the Craft and Ambition*

Ibid.

Pag. 162, 163.

*bition of Priests and Philosophers degenerate into mere Pagnism.* Here you see, 'tis not the *Christian Religion*, but the unwarrantable *Additions* to it, wherein JESUS CHRIST never had any hand, which he compares with the *Mysteries of Ceres* and the *Orgies of Bacchus*. And what, pray, is the main body of the *Popish, Eastern,* or other Superstitions, but the continuance of those Rites of *Heathen or Jewish* Original which Mr. Toland justly explodes? Or is any body that draws a Parallel between *Heathenism* and *Poper*y thought disaffected to Christianity? Indeed *profess* or *disguis'd Papists* will accuse him of such a Crime, but no *understanding Protestant* can ever be guilty of so much Weakness.

'Tis possible more Exceptions were made to Mr. Toland's Book in the *Committee*, or these not all in this Order; but these were all whereof he could inform himself, and of which he gives the most compendious and satisfactory account he can: being as ready to do the same in relation to all other Objections that shall fairly come to his knowledg. The greatest Hardship he complains of is, that, being an Inhabitant of *England*, he should be molested in *Ireland* (where he was only fortuitously born) for

a Book he publish'd in another Country. His Errand hither, God knows, was neither to propagate nor receive any Doctrines, new or old; and as he was far from ever designing to fix his constant Residence here, so he thinks himself as liable to be disturb'd in any other place, whither his Curiosity or Business may lead him, as in this Kingdom; which is a way of proceeding hitherto unheard of in the World. I shall give you no further trouble when I have told you, that I resolve always to continue an unalterable Friend to *Liberty*, an Advocate for *Religion* without Superstition, a true Lover of my *Country*, and in particular, Sir, your most humble Servant,

JOHN TOLAND.

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There was enough said in the preceding *Letter* concerning the *Socinianism* laid to Mr. Toland's Charge, and I doubt very much whether now there be any *Socinians* in *England*; I am sure, no considerable Body of them: for the Theology of the *Unitarians*, who vulgarly pass un-



under that name, is very different from that of *Socinus*. But these *Unitarians* in one of their latest Prints disown any Service intended their Cause by Mr. *Toland's* Book ; and all Sects, we know, are ready upon the least apparent Conformity to augment their own Numbers, especially with such as they seem to value for their Learning or other Qualifications. In *The Agreement of the Unitarians with the Catholick Church* occurs the following Paragraph.

P. 54, 55.

“ The (Bishop of *Worcester's*) eighth and  
 “ tenth Chapters, are imployed in oppo-  
 “ sing, and, as he thinks, in exposing and  
 “ ridiculing some Interpretations of a few  
 “ Texts of Scripture by the *Unitarians* ;  
 “ and attacking a few Paragraphs in Mr.  
 “ *Toland's* Book, *Christianity not Mysteri-*  
 “ *ous*. I know not what it was to his  
 “ Lordship's purpose to fall upon Mr. *To-*  
 “ *land's* Book. But if he would needs at-  
 “ tack the Book, he should have dealt  
 “ fairly. He should have discuss'd the  
 “ main Argument in it, and not carpt on-  
 “ ly at a few Passages ; and those too so  
 “ mangl'd and deform'd by his Represen-  
 “ tation of them, that I dare to affirm  
 “ Mr. *Toland* does not know his own  
 “ Book in the Bishop's Representation of  
 “ it. I do not perceive, to speak truly,

“ but that Book still stands in its full  
 “ strength; if it has not also acquir’d a  
 “ farther Reputation, by occasion of this  
 “ so unsuccessful nibbling at it. But sup-  
 “ pose the *Bishop* had disarm’d the *Gentle-*  
 “ *man*, what is that to us? Do we offer this  
 “ *Book against the Trinity of the Realists?*  
 “ *Was it written with Intention to serve us?*  
 “ *Does it contain any of our Allegations from*  
 “ *Reason, against the Trinity of Philoponus,*  
 “ *Joachim, and Gentilis?* We desire him  
 “ to answer to the Reasons in our own  
 “ Books against the *Trinity of the Tritheists.*  
 “ But to these he says not a word, but on-  
 “ ly falls upon Mr. Toland’s Book; in  
 “ which, or for which we are not in the least  
 “ concern’d. Nor do I think the Learned  
 “ and Ingenious Author will hold him-  
 “ self to be interested to defend that *Chris-*  
 “ *tianity not mysterious* with which his  
 “ Lordship presents us. So far that cele-  
 brated *Unitarian.*

A good Temper and sound Judgment usu-  
 ally go together, and if the absence of the  
 former be no Demonstration that the latter  
 is also wanting, yet questionless it creates  
 a very reasonable suspicion of it; for a bad  
 Cause is generally supported by Violence  
 and ill Arts, while Truth establishes it self  
 only by Lenity and Persuasion. This

is so certain, that when an undiscerning Person happens to be engag'd on the right side, and employs Force or Calumny in its defence, we always find he does it infinitely more harm than good. That such as receive Gain or Honour by any thing should oppose those who go about to destroy it, tho' with design to introduce a better in the room of it, is no great wonder tho' it be manifestly unjust. Thus the Silversmiths of *Ephesus* headed by *Demetrius* rais'd a mighty Tumult against the Apostle *Paul* for ruining their Trade, which was solely maintain'd by Lies and Impostures at the expence of the Peoples Credulity. The *Primitive Christians* were represented by the *Heathen Priests* as Atheistical, Rebellious, Incestuous, and in a word, polluted with all manner of Wickedness and Impiety; by which nefarious Artifices they procur'd those innocent Persons to be cruelly persecuted with Infamy, Confiscation, and Death it self in all its shapes. The *Waldenses*, *Wicclifists*, *Hussites*, and the first *Reformers* were treated after the same manner by the Church of *Rome*; and when they could not seize their Persons, they never fail'd to load 'em with horrid, black, and monstrous Aspersions, that they might not be wanting to



prejudice 'em all manner of ways, as if this had been the very Method prescrib'd in the Gospel to reduce the Erroneous. Thus we read such accounts of *Luther* and *Calvin's* Lives publish'd by the *Monks* of those Times, as paint 'em worse than Devils, and that make their Doctrine as different from what we know it to be, as the Historians were from telling Truth.

I am sorry to observe among us any Remains of that implacable and bitter Spirit, tho' such as distinguish themselves by their eminent Vertues retain no tincture of so mean and base a Disposition. The Character which that most excellent Person the late *Archbishop of Canterbury* has left on Record of the *Socinians* (when he was strenuously arguing against their Opinions) ought to be a Model which no body should be asham'd to imitate. He did not think to lessen his own Reputation, or to hurt his Cause, when he frankly acknowledg'd them to be a Pattern of the fair way of disputing, and debating matters of Religion without Heat and unseemly Reflections upon their Adversaries. They generally argue matters with that Temper and Gravity, says he, and with that freedom from Passion and Transport which becomes a serious and weighty Argument : and for the most part they rea-  
son

Four Serm.  
against the  
Socin. p.  
57, 58.

son closely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution, with great dexterity and decency; and yet with smartness and subtlety enough, with a very gentle heat and few hard words: *Vertues* to be prais'd wherever they are found, yea even in an *Enemy*, and very worthy our *Imitation*. Yet this great Man, who so candidly represents his Adversaries, was himself most scurrilously and unworthily handl'd by his own and the *Enemies* of the Government. And here I must do Justice to Dr. *Payne* lately deceas'd, who, as he tells the World in his Letter to the Bishop of *Rocheſter*, was desir'd by his Grace the present *Arch-bishop* of *Canterbury* to answer Mr. *Toland*; and why should not every body that thinks him in the wrong take the same liberty of writing against him, as he did to publish his *Thoughts* before? Now if Mr. *Toland's* own Judgment ought to be receiv'd in this case, the Doctor has in his two Sermons said more against him than the Bishop of *Worceſter*, Mr. *Norris*, the Anonymous *Oxonian*, the Author of the *Occasional Paper*, Mr. *Beverly*, Mr. *Gailhard*, Mr. *Browne*, or any other Answerer; and yet instead of treating him like a *Dominican Inquiſitor*, he uses, with some little warmth, such *Grave and Christian Language* as shews his  
Me-

Metropolitan's Judgment and Moderation in pitching upon him, as well as his own Skill and Sincerity in the management of his Trust.

Dr. Payne's  
Serm. p. 65,  
&c.

“ We must hold this *Mystery of Faith*  
“ (says Dr. Payne, speaking to his Audito-  
“ ry) with a *Christian good Temper*, and  
“ not lose that while we are contending  
“ for the other ; nor let our Contentions  
“ grow so warm and intemperate, so fierce  
“ and cruel as to forget and violate the  
“ plain Morals of Christianity, while we  
“ are over earnestly disputing for the Faith  
“ of it ; or perhaps *only for some false and*  
“ *mistaken, or at least some useless Opinions,*  
“ *and over-nice and subtle Controversies*  
“ *about it.* This has been the fault of  
“ those who have contended more for  
“ Victory than Truth, and more for their  
“ own Credit and Vain-glory than the  
“ Christian Faith ; who tho they may be  
“ in the right, as 'tis ten to one that  
“ they are not ( *for Truth seldom*  
“ *dwells with such a Spirit of Rage, and*  
“ *Pride, and Passion, but rather with a*  
“ *quite other Temper* ) yet they greatly  
“ deserve the Cause they so unduly ma-  
“ nage. And as they are never like to  
“ convince their Adversaries, so they  
“ give others just ground to suspect that  
“ they



“ they supply want of better Reason and  
“ stronger Arguments with weak and impo-  
“ tent Calumny, with undecent and unbe-  
“ coming Reflections. This is as Criminal  
“ and as Unchristian as the Error or the  
“ Heresy they are so zealous against; and  
“ ’tis to be doubted ’tis rather a false Fire  
“ and a hypocritical Zeal, not for the Cause  
“ of God so much as their own; and that  
“ this is kindl’d not from the Altar, but some  
“ other place. and blown up by some private  
“ PIQUE and sinister Designs, that thus  
“ blazes out to such an outrageous degree  
“ as to consume and destroy, not only  
“ its Adversaries if it were in its power,  
“ but even the most vital and substantial  
“ Parts of Christianity; even Peace, Love,  
“ and Charity; and contends for the Chris-  
“ tian Faith with such a most Diabolical  
“ and Unchristian Temper. This is very  
“ far from the Spirit of Christ and Christi-  
“ anity; and however precious the Faith  
“ be, yet the Apostle tells us, *if we had*  
“ *all Faith, and understood all Mysteries, and*  
“ *all Knowledg, yet without Charity we are*  
“ *nothing*, however great we may be in  
“ our own Thoughts. And such a Zeal  
“ of Sowness and Bitterness, as it is gene-  
“ rally without Knowledg, so it is always  
“ without Religion; and tho it hold the My-  
“ stery

“ *stery of Faith* (and do not rather per-  
 “ vert and corrupt it) yet, to be sure,  
 “ this is not, according to the Apostle’s  
 “ Advice, *in a pure Conscience*.

There needs no more to be added in this place but a sincere acknowledgment from Mr. Toland, that (notwithstanding any Prejudices he may be suppos’d to entertain against *Ireland*) he met there, and had the Honour to be acquainted with a great many worthy Gentlemen, who by their extraordinary Parts, Education, and Vertues, merit to be distinguish’d in any Country of the World. He knows several Men and Women (and doubtless there are or should be more) who don’t confine all Salvation to the narrow Limits of a *Se&*, nor mistake the affected *Phrases* of any Party for the only true *Christianity*: who neither hate nor despise others for differing from them in *Opinion*, no more than in Features or Complexion; knowing that nobody can believe as he pleases, and it were the highest Injustice to expect a Man should profess with his Mouth what in his Heart he detests: Persons who can live easily with all Men, as being of one Race, and fellow-Citizens of the same World; not denying any body the liberty of improving the Happiness of the *Soci-*  
*ety*

ety by his Invention, Learning, Industry, or Example : And who, in a word, are not willing to deprive themselves of real and certain *Advantages* for the sake of uncertain, contested, or useless *Speculations* ; as if one that wants it should reject the proffer'd Service of an honest and able Accountant, because he believes not a World in the Moon ; or not allow an Ingenious Man's Conversation to be agreeable, for ridiculing the Fable of St. *Patrick's* Purgatory. As for the *Publick Peace*, which is pretended to be endanger'd by a TOLERATION, it has been disturb'd or subverted in all Ages and Places of the World, not either by *Conscientious* or *Enquiring* Men, but by those who no less dogmatically than tyrannically *impose* upon their Understandings ; and who, in spite of all their Disguises, appear to be much more concern'd for SOVERAIGNTY than REFORMATION. 'Tis likewise clear as the Sun they were Mr. *Toland's* Enemies that made, or continue all the needless stir about his Book, and not his Friends, who only acted defensively for the *Common Liberty* of Mankind, but not upon his private account. Nor does he (who, one would think, should know it best) believe any Persons in *Ireland* or elsewhere favour'd him



him a jot the more for writing that *Treatise*; and if they did, he was never yet inform'd of this aeccessory Kindness either by themselves, or others by their Deputation: neither does he make returns of Love or Respect to any body living upon this mere Consideration.

*Qui statuit aliquid, parte inaudita altera,  
Æquum licet statuerit, haud Æquus est.*  
Seneca.

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FINIS.















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Christianity not mysterious

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